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SACRED STREAMS:

THE ANCIENT AND MODERN HISTORY

OF THE

RIVERS OF THE BIBLE.

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BY

PHILIP HENRY GOSSE, F.R.S.

WITH FORTY-FOUR ENGRAVINGS AND A MAP.

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE want of works suitable for reading on the Lord's Day has been often felt. Parents, teachers, and others, who have the care of youth, who feel the responsibility of training up their charge in the knowledge and fear of the Lord, are often at a loss how to direct the employment of time on this sacred day. There are many hours not occupied in attendance on the public means of grace, which they feel ought not to be spent in secular occupations, or mere amusement. A book, which shall convey Divine truths in a manner calculated to win the attention, engage the interest, and allure the reader on from page to page with unabated pleasure, cannot but be valuable. We can hardly expect that our children and domestics, who have never yet become experimentally acquainted with Divine grace, should be able to relish works of a doctrinal or devotional character, which afford food and minister refreshment to a spiritual person. And yet it would be culpable negligence to permit them to follow their own inclinations, without an effort to instruct their minds and win their hearts to God.

The author of the present volume proposed to himself the production of a work which should embrace

332878

many subjects of varied interest, treated in a lively and attractive manner, yet not out of keeping with the sacred engagements and associations of the Lord's Day, to meet this want. The Rivers and Streams of Palestine and the neighbouring lands, hallowed by their mention in the Book of God, and the narratives of high interest connected with these scenes in Holy Writ, are the immediate subjects of the work; while it has been the object of the author to draw from these events and scenes the lessons of heavenly wisdom, the truths of spiritual import, bearing on the faith and practice of man, for which they have been recorded. It is hoped that the whole spirit and tone of these pages, as well as every sentiment in them, may be found to be in harmony with "the doctrine which is according to godliness," and to promote the glory of the Lord Jesus.

LONDON, *Sept.*, 1850.

IN the present edition every page has been carefully revised by the author. A few corrections have been made, and a few facts have been introduced, which the progress of knowledge during more than a quarter of a century has brought to light. Some additions have also been made to the spiritual instruction; of which the most important is the exposition at page 221, on the Baptism of the Lord Jesus.

TORQUAY, *June*, 1877.

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INTRODUCTION.

VERY pleasant are the associations which we habitually connect with a river; whether we think of it as bubbling out of its crystal fountain in the mountain-side;—or dashing, in a sheeted cascade, over green and slippery rocks, half hidden by jutting ferns, whirled about in feathery tufts of spray by every playful breeze, and lost in a perpetual cloud of foam in the dark hollow beneath;—or brawling along the valley in its pebbly bed, murmuring and fretting at the petty opposition it meets with;—or silently pursuing its broad and majestic course through the plains and meadows, fertilizing cultivated regions, reflecting from its peaceful bosom villages and towns and domed cities;—or, at length, having received a hundred tributaries, dilating into the vast estuary, bearing the proud fleets of commerce and war, and almost rivalling in grandeur the ocean into which it is pouring its everlasting tribute of waters.

Sweet is it, in the heat of summer's noon, to sit on the mossy bank, and watch the meandering stream, now darkling and concealed from the sun by the overhanging shrubs and trees, whose branches kiss

one another across its bosom, now sparkling out in the bright sunbeams that reveal and illuminate every stone and shell upon its bottom,—to feel its coolness, and admire its clearness, and enjoy the thoughts and images, associations and feelings, which it presents to the mind, all peaceful, soothing, and refreshing.

And pleasant it is to muse on the varied scenes and events and characters, with which it has been connected in by-gone ages, and in which its memory is embalmed. To say, Here, on these banks, was marshalled the little band, feeble in numbers, but strong in their love of their native soil, and in their righteous cause, who met the swarming hosts of invading foes, and fought and conquered. Here, by this stone, stood the dauntless man who dared to withstand a tyrant's cruel mandate, and delivered his village from oppression. There, in that little cot, was born the hero who led his country's fleets to victory, and caused her name to be mentioned with reverence among the nations. Along this verdant bank has often mused the poet, whose burning words have found a response in many a land and language; and from the wild and beautiful scenery of this lovely stream he caught his inspiration. Yonder rising knoll has witnessed the experiments of the philosopher who subjected to man's will and power the elements of nature. The music of this murmuring brook used often to soothe the soul of the philanthropist, as he mused on his plans for ameliorating the condition of his suffering fellow-men.

But it we in this temperate clime know a little of the pleasant feelings connected with clear streams and running waters, what must be their force in lands where the severest trials of life are described under the emblem of the fiercé rays of the sun! where the protecting care of Jehovah for His dear people is called a "shadow from the heat," the "shadow of a great rock in a weary land!" and where the sweetest joys of the heavenly rest are set before the tired and tempted saints of God, under similar imagery: "Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb . . . shall lead them unto living fountains of waters!"

In such lands, nothing is more natural than that fresh streams and flowing rivers should be constantly used by the inspired poets and prophets as emblems by which to call up and shadow forth the sweetest, holiest, and most comfortable thoughts. Is peace spoken of? It shall "flow as a river." Is judgment or righteousness prayed for? It is that it may "run down as waters, and as a mighty stream." The advantages of wisdom in a man's heart are "as deep waters, and as a flowing brook." Is a man under the curse of God? "He shall not see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter." Do desolation and confusion spread over the earth, wasting and destroying like an irruption of the sea? The protection and preservation of the saints of God are secured; for "there is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." The Lord Jesus

is set forth "as rivers of water in a dry place;" He will, by-and-by, bless restored Jerusalem, so long withered and forsaken, and "extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream;" He will Himself be to Israel "a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby"; for He is the Fountain and Well-spring of all blessing.

How great must have been the joy and comfort which the ancient people of God took in their rills and brooks wherewith their thirst was quenched, and by which fertility was given to the beautiful and goodly land,—that "land of brooks of water," of hills and valleys, which Jehovah had given them, and from which so many sweet images and allusions were drawn, turning their thoughts to earthly and heavenly blessings, and to their gracious and loving God!

And if historical and personal associations often crowd upon the mind, as we walk by the bank of a favourite stream in our own land, endearing it to our imagination and heart,—with what a deepened interest should we tread where every spot is hallowed by some ancient memory, some record of a history in which God Himself is the chief actor! Not a rill or river but has some story to tell, some lesson to teach, some song of praise to elicit, in lands where angels talked with men, where inspired poets sang, where prophets and seers unfolded the far-distant

future, where the visible glory of God dwelt, where the arm of Jehovah was ever stretched out in blessing, deliverance, protection, or chastisement, where patriarchs sojourned, and where, for a while, tabernacled Jesus, the glorious "Word made flesh."

I.

THE RIVER EUPHRATES.

PARADISE.

The Fall—Grace—The Promised Seed—Sacrifice—Reconciliation—Righteousness.

BABEL.

The Builders—The Tower—The Confusion of Tongues—Birs Nimroud.

THE MIGRATION OF ABRAM.

The Mesopotamian Valley—The Cavalcade—Abram and Lot—The Call of Abram—Sojourn at Charran—The Stranger and Pilgrim.

THE MISSION OF ELIEZER.

Prayer—Rebekah—The Return—The Antitype.

BABYLON.

The Hanging Gardens—The Palace—The Court—Daniel—The Great Image—The Kingdom of Christ.

THE CAPTIVES.

Israel's Desolation—Seraiah's Mission—The Doom of Babylon—Belshazzar's Feast—The Writing on the Wall—Daniel's Interpretation—Cyrus—The Last Night of Babylon.

SUBSEQUENT HISTORY.

Topography—Ruins of Babylon—The Euphrates Expedition—Physical History—A Solemn Contrast.

Genesis II., III.

A FAIR and goodly scene is spread before our reverent imagination. A broad valley expands on either hand, bounded by distant mountains, whose purple peaks, range above range, glow in the beams of the morning sun. Hill and dale, irregular undulations, broad swelling mounds, and gentle slopes, afford perpetual variety to the surface. Through the centre there flows, in winding course, a broad river, the smoothness of whose mirror-like bosom is unruffled by a ripple, as it pours its volume of clear and calm waters onward to the ocean. It is the majestic Euphrates.

This is Eden, the garden of God. Everything that can gratify the sense is here in abundance, unmingled with anything that can hurt or annoy. "Every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food," grows here; the spreading arms of the banian, the baobab, and the terebinth, cover the ground with a refreshing shadow; the massive forms of the oak and the cotton-tree contrast with the taper elegance of the poplar and the pine; the graceful banana and plantain wave their broad leaves, cut into strips by the wanton breeze; huge clumps of bamboos nod like gigantic ostrich-plumes on the hillocks; and above all tower up into the sky the light and lofty

palms, waving their feathery green coronets against the sparkling blue of heaven.

How temptingly the rich fruits hang and cluster in these spicy groves! On the highest knolls the juicy apple and pear, the velvet peach, the bloomed plum, the golden apricot, and the blushing cherry stand in thick profusion; in the lower glades, walled in by the sheltering groves, are others richer still; the brilliant pomegranate, the yellow guava, the custard-apple, so meltingly luscious, the odorous pine-apple, the citron and orange, and the most delicious of terrestrial productions, the crimson mangosteen, invite the hand to pluck them. The queenly date-palm is loaded with its sweet bunches, over which the vine, climbing to its lofty summit, has thrown a drapery of graceful foliage, and formed a natural arbour, thickly hung with empurpled clusters.

No trace of winter is here; but the glories of spring, of summer, and of autumn are united in one sweet season, for which earth has no name. The opening bud, the expanded flower, the matured fruit, are everywhere seen together in beautiful harmony. The air is redolent with the fragrance of flowers, and the eye is enraptured with their beauty of colour and of form. What gorgeous and fantastic parasites droop from the branches of the great trees! What a magnificence of sheeted bloom is displayed by those masses of purple rhododendrons!

The roses are here without thorns, and the fruits are not defended by brambles. No naked spots of

brown barren earth appear, nor do any points of jagged rock jut out through the verdant turf; but here and there its greenness is varied by precious gems lying unheeded, as if they had dropped out of a royal diadem. The topaz and the emerald and

ORIENTAL VEGETATION.

the golden chrysolite, the rich ruby and the sparkling diamond fling back most lustrously the rays of the sun; and where the placid river gently washes its bordering sands, lie masses of gold and silver, some in unformed magnificence, and others vying with the

vegetable productions around, in displaying various arborescent and foliated forms of fantastic beauty.

Everything speaks of wisdom and power and skill; but not of these alone: consummate goodness is especially manifest. The scrupulous exclusion of that not only which could injure or give pain, but which could displease in the least degree, with the accumulation of all that could afford delight, speaks loudly of the benevolence of the Almighty Creator. But who are the guests for whom this feast is spread? It is a new-born world on which we are looking, and this garden is the very concentration of its glory, but yesterday out of the hand of its Maker. Where are the tenants for whom this residence is provided?

Many living creatures walk among these groves, and repose upon the enamelled greensward. The wolf and the lamb are feeding together, and the speckled leopard is lying down with the kid; the tiger is leaping in gamesome play around the ruminating kine; and yonder the lordly lion is gently licking with his rough tongue the fur of the gazelle that is lying between his paws. These are all harmless and guileless; yet none of them seem capable of more than a superficial enjoyment of the loveliness amidst which they dwell. Yonder comes one who by his superior size and mien may claim a higher consideration; as he slowly marches through the grove of teak-trees, the forest shakes with his tread, his eye beams with intelligence and sagacity, and as he now and then plucks a flower with his lithe proboscis, he

seems to have a higher appreciation of its beauty and fragrance than his fellows. But as he draws nearer we see that he is only one among them, and that the fair garden was not made for him.

Is this beauteous scene then without an inhabitant capable of enjoying and of ruling it? No. Voices come up from the banks of Euphrates, and there, seated in a bower of jasmine and rose, are a pair of God-like beings, to whom has been committed the lordship of this paradise. Not like the beasts they sit, but erect, and with their faces towards the heaven; nor clothed, but in naked dignity; for as yet there is no sin, and therefore no shame. Only they two are seen, yet as they converse on high and holy themes, a third voice, of awful yet gentle tones, mingles with theirs. It is the voice of God, and yet they are not afraid.

Do we seek to know the nature of the converse between the Most High God and His creature man—as yet unfallen and stainless? The gracious Creator speaks of the glories of His new-made world, and appoints Man His vicegerent over it: "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." He speaks also of higher things; and to their grateful ears He reveals somewhat of His own nature and character; He tells them of His wisdom and power, of His love and faithfulness, His holiness and justice. He speaks to them of their relation to Himself; of their duty; claims implicit and exact

obedience at all times from them; promises everlasting continuance in happiness if they remain true in allegiance to Him, but warns them that the consequence of disobedience will be DEATH. To all they yield an intelligent and willing assent, and, conscious of their uprightness, say Amen to the threatenings, no less than to the promises. Finally, one test their Almighty Sovereign gives them, whereby He will prove their obedience. There are in the midst of the garden two trees of mystic power. The one is the tree of life, whose fruit, yielded every month, is intended to be, in case of obedience, the sacramental pledge of immortality. The other is the tree of knowledge of good and evil; the fruit of which is fair and beautiful to the eye, pleasant to the taste, and good for food; but it is hedged round by the solemn prohibition of Jehovah, who thus promulgates His only law: "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The knowledge of good shall be possessed while man abstains in obedience to God: the fatal knowledge of evil shall be introduced if he in disobedience partake of its fruit. Thus is established, though but for a brief season, the Covenant of Works. "The man that doeth them, shall live in them."

It is evening. The effulgent sun, after having climbed up to the zenith, has at length descended to the horizon, and looks with slanting gaze upon a scene whose loveliness he will not see on the

morrow. A pleasant breeze is whispering among the tremulous leaves of the grove, and breaking the surface of Euphrates into a dancing and sparkling ripple. The voice of the turtle comes plaintively over the river, and the nightingale has already begun his nightly hymn of praise. The beasts are gamboling in sportive innocence, and all nature is enjoying "the cool of the day."

But where are Adam and his wife? Alas! the scene has no joy for them. They have listened to the voice of the insidious tempter, and have eaten of the tree of knowledge of good and evil! They have gained the knowledge of evil which before they knew not; their knowledge of good amounts only to the assurance that they have lost it. They perceive—what hitherto had excited no feeling of shame—that they are naked; they have lost the covering robe of innocence, which was the assurance of God's protection, and their bodily nakedness now appears to them as an emblem and an expression of that shameful and defenceless condition to which their souls are reduced. They are engaged, in moody and desponding silence, in endeavouring to sew together the broad leaves of a fig-tree, to form a flimsy covering for their exposed persons. Vain attempt! as if a guilty and condemned sinner could, by any works or contrivances of his own, repel or avert the threatenings of Divine wrath!

Hark! from the accustomed bower comes a well-known voice. Awful it had seemed in their in-

nocence; but now,—how does it thrill through their trembling hearts! In their insanity of terror they seek to hide among the trees from the omniscient Jehovah; but again the voice comes forth, "Where art thou?" And the terrific demand penetrates in a moment all their disguises, and compels the reluctant reply.

Oh, who would not have expected that now the sentence hanging over the guilty pair would be at once pronounced, and as quickly executed! The doom would have been righteous, nor could a breath have been uttered against the spotless holiness and justice of the Most High God, if He had now glorified Himself in vengeance, as He had done before upon the sinning angels. For "whatever there hath been in any sin, of unbelief, ingratitude, apostasy, rebellion, robbery, contempt, defiance, hard thoughts of, and enmity against, God; whatever there hath been of idolatry, as comprehending faith in, worship of, and obedience to, Satan, the god and prince of this world; of exorbitant pride, self-love, and self-will, in affecting that independency, exaltation, and homage, which belong to God; and that inordinate love of the creatures, in seeking our happiness in the possession and enjoyment of them; whatever of discontent, sensual lust, covetousness, murder, and mischief, were ever yet contained in any one, or all, of the sins which have been committed upon earth;—all concentred in this one transgression."*

* Scott, *in loc.*

But God's thoughts are not man's thoughts. It is not for the execution of vengeance that He is now come down, but for the exhibition of a glorious attribute in His character, which had never yet been manifested. That attribute is GRACE. The Almighty God hath once glorified Himself by inflicting righteous wrath upon the angels that kept not their first estate; He will now still more greatly glorify Himself in freely forgiving guilty man.

The poor culprits, indeed, little expect the exhibition of mercy, and are only intent on hiding their sin or extenuating its guilt. But Jehovah, unsolicited, and without waiting for any humiliation on their part, reveals His purpose, and takes the side of the sinner against the insidious destroyer. A Deliverer is promised, the Seed of the woman, who shall successfully contend with him before whom they have fallen. He is to be the woman's Seed, that He may gain the victory in human form and nature, in which it has been lost. But He is to be mightier than Satan, the great enemy of God and man; and therefore Divine. Here, then, is the great promise of the Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, as the repairer of the breach, and the reconciler of man to God.

Not without cost, however, can the reconciliation be accomplished. "Thou shalt bruise his heel." The Son of God, when, at the appointed time, He comes to carry out this purpose of grace, must accomplish it by His own sufferings and death. Satan and

his seed, in the fury of their rage, shall succeed in crucifying the Lord of glory, and thus appear to gain a momentary triumph. But this is, in truth, the victory; for, by His giving up Himself as a sacrifice for sin, and as a surety for guilty man, the righteous claim of God's holy law is fully met, and Satan's power over the believing sinner for ever crushed and broken. Thus, by the voluntary humiliation of the Son of God, putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, the majesty of the Divine holiness is more gloriously vindicated than it could have been even by the infliction of the penalty on the guilty sinner; while at the same time it makes a way for the outflowing of that mighty grace for which the praises of countless millions of redeemed saints shall go up to God throughout eternity.

To impress these solemn but most blessed truths on the hearts of the pardoned sinners, and to teach them to exercise an active and personal faith on the promised Saviour, a striking scene is now enacted: an altar of earth is quickly formed; an innocent lamb is selected from the flocks playing around, and dies by the hand of God; and the body, placed on the altar, is consumed by fire from heaven. They are thus vividly taught that God accepts an innocent victim, of whom this lamb is a shadow, instead of the guilty,—the guilt being transferred or imputed to the representative. Through the sign they look to the thing signified, thankfully accept God's Lamb as their surety, and joyfully behold the flame of

Divine wrath averted from themselves and falling upon their representative.

And now the skin of the slain victim is, by the hand of God Himself, made into garments, with which He clothes their nakedness; and their own poor fig-leaves are gladly cast aside for ever. In this they are taught not only a sinner's need of a righteousness to cover him, better than any he can procure, but that God Himself provides that righteousness, and clothes him with it; and that this is none other than the righteousness of the Lamb of God, whose blood has already made atonement for his guilt.

Reader! Have you ever felt the need of blood to cancel *your* guilt, and of a spotless righteousness to cover *your* soul before God? And have you found these in Christ?

Genesis XI.

NEARLY eighteen centuries have passed away; and the lovely garden of Eden has been so defaced and destroyed by the overflowing of the Flood, that not a vestige even of its situation remains. But "that great river, the river Euphrates," still flows through the same region as before, and on its banks we again take our stand.

Since our first scene the earth has been peopled, depopulated, and is now fast filling with people again. But they have not learned righteousness from God's

judgments. Pride, self-will, a haughty independency of God, and a daring defiance of His purposes, are their characteristics. They seek to aggrandize themselves; to do deeds of renown that shall exalt their own glory, and make their names to be remembered with admiration among men. The Divine command to replenish the earth is already operating, and families are beginning to wander away eastward and westward and northward and southward. But to the majority this is displeasing, and they seek to resist, and if possible, to prevent, this dispersion, and to form a great centre of unity, around which all the families of mankind shall gather under one government. And other still more infidel thoughts are working in their hearts: forgetful or regardless of the promise, that there shall be no more a flood to destroy the earth, they task their ingenuity to devise means whereby they may laugh to scorn the vengeance of Jehovah, should He again resort to such a means of executing His wrath against sin.

A grand council is called; and Nimrod, who has already grown from a mighty hunter of beasts to be a king of men, takes the lead in its decisions. In their proud self-sufficiency, and in that consciousness of power which is inspired by great masses of men combining with unity of purpose, they think that nothing can be restrained from them which they imagine to do. "Go to," is their language, for they encourage themselves in the evil matter,—"Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may

reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."

And lo! a place is found which seems expressly formed for the carrying out of their godless design. An immense tract of level ground, the plain of Shinar, expands on each side of the Euphrates, which, though two hundred and fifty miles from its

THE EUPHRATES.

mouth, is here a noble river, broad, deep, and rapid. The soil is composed of clay fit for the making of bricks; and there are in the vicinity, fountains, which throw up large quantities of asphaltum, or mineral pitch, which, being heated, shall serve them as a strong and durable cement.

But why, if it be their object to form a tower of

such an elevation as shall put them out of danger of any future deluge, do they not rather select the summit of a mountain than a level plain? Doubtless, because there the means of building such a structure would be difficult to procure, while here they are found in abundance; not to mention the eligibility of the situation, on the banks of a mighty river, for a city which is intended to be the metropolis of mankind.

In high hope and eager confidence of success, the work begins. The earth dug out to form the foundation is laid in heaps, fashioned into square bricks, and baked in a furnace. The bitumen, melted by heat, is poured over the structure at every thirtieth course of bricks, which, running down into the interstices, cements the whole by cooling into one solid mass. The city and the tower proceed simultaneously; and as there are many artificers, both are rapidly rising. What vastness and grandeur of design are apparent in the work! One who saw both, long afterwards, describes the city as a square, each side of which measured one hundred and twenty stadia, or fifteen miles; and the tower as having for its basement a cube of solid masonry measuring a furlong on every side. On this a smaller storey is erected, and on this another, until eight, successively diminishing in size, already elevate the proud edifice to the sky. A staircase, winding round the outside of the building, leads from storey to storey.

But now it is time for God to interfere. He looks

down from heaven, and sees, with displeasure, that, with very few exceptions, all the children of men are engaged in following the devices of their own evil hearts. Noah and Shem, with perhaps a small godly remnant, have protested against the baneful enterprise, but without effect; and they have retired from their fellows. The work has been suffered to proceed until the design of the contrivers has become fully manifest, and their pride and rage against the Most

BRICKS FROM BABYLON.

High abundantly developed. Yet He deals with them in undeserved mercy; He does not pour upon them the fierceness of His wrath, but contents Himself with putting an effectual stop to their vain-glorious design.

Hitherto there had been no deviation from the primitive tongue spoken by the antediluvians, and preserved by Noah and his family: "The whole earth was of one language and one speech." But now, by a miraculous interposition, the Almighty

God confounds their language, introducing new tongues and dialects, and obliterating from their minds all remembrance of that which they had hitherto spoken. Utter confusion is the immediate consequence; an undistinguishable jargon of sounds, in which no man understands his fellow; and hence the work is brought to a sudden period, from the impossibility of combined operation in the absence of a common vehicle for the communication of ideas.

Thus easily does God baffle the proudest designs of men, when they interfere with His purposes: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; Jehovah shall have them in derision." And thus shall it ever be: those who set themselves up against the revealed purposes of God, whether in providence or in grace, and persist in their mad obduracy, shall not only find that their schemes are vain and useless, but shall reap everlasting shame and confusion as their portion.

The desire of these bold builders was to make for themselves a name. Yet of not a single individual of the mighty multitude has history preserved the name; if we except Nimrod, of whom it is emphatically said, "The beginning of his kingdom was Babel [confusion]."

More than four thousand years have elapsed since the event which we have described took place; yet there, in the midst of the desolate plain of Shinar, stands the mighty pile, a burnt and blackened heap, an eloquent witness of the power and yet the impotency of man. Kingdoms and cities have risen and

fallen there, leaving scarcely a trace behind! but there rolls still, in silent dignity, the broad Euphrates, and on its banks stands yet the shrunken and shapeless, but still gigantic ruin.

The following description of the great heap, called by the Arabs "Birs Nimroud," is given by Mr. Rich

BIRS NIMROUD.

in his "Memoir on the Ruins of Babylon," and is interesting as showing the present condition of the mightiest and most ancient* of human works of art. "The Birs Nimroud is a mound of an oblong form, the total circumference of which is 762 yards. At the eastern side it is cloven by a deep furrow, and is

* Perhaps with the exception of the Great Pyramid; if, indeed, the discoveries and inferences of Professor Piazzi Smyth, concerning this wondrous edifice, are verities.

not more than fifty or sixty feet high; but at the western side it rises in a conical figure to the elevation of 198 feet, and on its summit is a solid pile of brick thirty-seven feet high by twenty-eight in breadth, diminishing in thickness to the top, which is broken and irregular, and rent by a large fissure extending through a third of its height. It is perforated by small square holes disposed in rhomboids. The fine burnt bricks of which it is built have inscriptions on them, and so excellent is the cement, which appears to be lime-mortar, that it is nearly impossible to extract one whole. The other parts of the summit of this hill are occupied by immense fragments of brickwork of no determinate figure, tumbled together, and converted into solid vitrified masses, the layers of brick being perfectly discernible. These ruins stand on a prodigious mound, the whole of which is itself a ruin, channelled by the weather, and strewed with fragments of black stone, sandstone, and marble. In the eastern part, layers of unburnt brick, but no reeds, are to be seen. In the north side may be seen traces of building exactly similar to the brick pile. At the foot of the mound a step may be traced scarcely elevated above the plain, exceeding in extent by several feet each way, the true or measured base; and there is a quadrangular inclosure round the whole as at the Mujelibè [another immense ruin, supposed to have been the palace of the kings of Babylon], but much more perfect, and of greater dimensions."

Genesis XII.

LET us in imagination transport ourselves to a winding valley in the midst of a wild and precipitous mountain-region. Some of the loftiest peaks are covered with snow; and patches of white, speckling the mountain side, though the spring is far advanced, tell us that we are now in a country where the reign of winter is familiar. A stream of considerable size

A MESOPOTAMIAN VALLEY.

pours through the lower ground, now hemmed in by precipitous walls of rock, now dashing in a sheet of foam over a broken ledge, now brawling in its deep channel beneath, covered with fragments of ice and half-melted masses of mountain snow, and now spreading itself over a level tract in a broad and

shallow pool. We are again on the banks of the Euphrates, in its upper course, and the uneven country around us is the highland of Mesopotamia.

The water of the river is of a chilling coldness, yet the air, in the sheltered bottoms, is mild and balmy, and the rays of the sun, reflected from the mountain sides, pour down with great power upon the verdant banks. The oak forests and groves of walnuts that stud the higher slopes are already in full leaf, and by the yellow-green hue of their newly-expanded leaves, refresh the eye of the beholder. The southern declivities are cultivated: well-fenced fields, verdant with the springing wheat, are interspersed with vineyards and olive-yards, and with orchards and gardens in which grow the fig, the mulberry, the pomegranate, the apple, the pear, the almond, and the apricot. These are for the most part richly covered with their sheets of beauteous blossom. The silvery pine, the tamarisk, and the poplar shoot out of the clefts of the rocks, and the spreading limbs of a gigantic plane-tree afford shadow to a cottage with its adjuncts.

The banks of the river and the whole surface of the valley are like a vast flower-garden. Beds of poppies, scarlet and white; bugloss, borage, and larkspur of the richest azure; white and blushing cistuses; anemones, with white, scarlet, and delicately pencilled petals; ranunculuses, campanulas, and a thousand other flowers with names unknown to us, display their beauties or diffuse their fragrance on

every side. But chiefly the bulbous-rooted plants abound in this region: wild tulips, white, red, and purple, yellow daffodils and jonquils, gladioluses, hyacinths of many species, cyclamens with drooping

THE PERSIAN CYCLAMEN.

blushing blossoms, and lilies of every gay hue, scarlet, orange, yellow, white, purple, shoot up their sword-like leaves and expand their lovely corollas from the mossy turf, enamelling its surface like a gorgeous carpet.

But what is that moving mass slowly emerging from a dark gorge far up in the hills, and gradually extending itself in a long winding line on the mountain-side? The shouts of men, softened by the distance, come distinctly upon the ear, mingled with the lowing of oxen, the bleating of calves and sheep, and other confused sounds that are too far off to be recognised. The tortuous train of living things still lengthens, and long before the last of the file has issued from the distant pass, the van has approached sufficiently near for us to perceive the nature and character of the procession. Its course is evidently towards yonder level spot, where the Euphrates, spreading itself over the ground in a broad but shallow lake, may without much difficulty be forded.

In front, seated on a milk-white ass of great size and noble bearing, is one who is evidently the lord of the party. His fine features, though browned by habitual exposure, have the freshness which marks the native of an upland country. His erect carriage, the calm dignity of his countenance, and the compression of his finely-formed lips, tell of one accustomed to command;, though at present he seems to take little part in the active superintendence of the cavalcade, and the fire of his large dark eyes is tempered by a meekness that seems habitual to them. He is clothed in a long white robe, as are many of his companions; and only the large jewel that blazes in the front of his richly-coloured turban, distinguishes his dress from theirs. The raven blackness

of his hair begins to yield to the assaults of years, yet the venerable man before us can scarcely yet be considered as beyond the prime of life.

By his side, mounted like himself on a white ass, is a man apparently of the same rank in life, but considerably younger. His features are cast in the same mould, but are less pleasing in their expression; and his unquiet eye lacks the meekness of his more aged companion's. They converse together with an unreserved freedom, and there is in their deportment toward each other an affectionate cordiality, which indicates that they are bound by the tie of friendship, if not of kindred.

The procession is evidently that of a wealthy pastoral emir, migrating with his numerous household and retainers, and with his flocks and herds, from one country to another. The long, curved, ungainly necks of hundreds of camels rise above the general level, and their hunched backs are loaded with tents, poles, the larger articles of furniture, and various packages of baggage, so as often to project far on each side. On the very summit of some of these, seated on the immense piles of lighter luggage, at an elevation which makes us tremble for the security of their position, we see women, old men, and even children, who gaze about with an indifference or a curiosity which shows us that the apparent danger of their position is not at all occupying their thoughts. These are the slaves and inferior domestics of the household.

The baggage camels follow one another in single file, each being led by a halter fastened to the harness of the one that precedes it; the foremost of the number is guided by an experienced servant, who either leads it by the halter, or rides upon its hunch. Around are many saddled and bridled dromedaries, camels of a lighter and more elegant form, differing not in species, but only in breed, from their more clumsy and ungainly fellows, just as a riding-horse differs from a cart-horse. These bear the officers of the establishment,—the stewards, the chief herdsmen and shepherds, and the superintendents of the various classes of menials which belong to so extensive a household, together with their wives and elder children. They are not strung together like the drudging baggage-camels, but each rider governs his own beast.

Asses are prominent in the cavalcade. Not the poor, ragged, spirit-broken drudges of modern times, with which we in the West are familiar, but sleek, well-formed, high-mettled animals, little inferior to horses in size, figure, or speed. Most of these are led; though a few are saddled, and bear some of the most confidential of the domestic servants, immediately behind the emir and his young companion. The she-asses are accompanied by their prancing foals.

Herds of lowing oxen and kine, some with long pendent horns, and others with short horns and a prominent hump on the shoulder; flocks of sheep

of a beautiful breed, with tall twisted horns, and goats with long hanging ears, bring up the rear, making the rocks around vocal with the echoes of their pertinacious cries. These are specially valuable not only for their flesh, but also for their milk, which, with the butter and cheese produced from it, constitutes an important part of the food of the household.

ORIENTAL CATTLE.

The whole motley line is under the guidance and supervision of the young and middle-aged servants. Vigorous and active youths, with garments tucked up, and girded loins, run hither and thither, accompanied by their useful, but somewhat despised assistants, the "dogs of the flock." They find full employment in repressing those animals that are too exuberant, driving-in those that wander from

the line of march, urging-on the lagging, encouraging by voice and caresses such as are becoming weary, taking care of those that are hurt, and guarding against the thousand mishaps and accidents that are constantly liable to occur in such a journey. They carry a rod or staff in their hands, but those whose special business it is to mind the flocks, substitute for this the well-known shepherd's crook. In general, however, the voice is sufficient to guide the flock, for the sheep know the shepherd's voice. Many of the men are seen carrying the young and weakly lambs in their arms, or in the folds of their loose garments; and much care is exercised towards those which from age or pregnancy, or any other cause, are incapable of great fatigue. Hence the progress of the caravan is slow, and often interrupted; and its strength is occasionally recruited by a lengthened rest, where good pasturage is met with.

The interesting scene before us is a signal exhibition of Faith, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The venerable man at the head of the troop, is Abram, the Hebrew, and his companion is Lot, his brother's son. This goodly array of flocks and herds is their worldly substance, and the men, women, and children, are their families and dependents. They are turning their backs on their native country at the command of God; and they go forth, not knowing whither they go, but content to be guided by the goodness and wisdom of their Almighty Friend.

A few years ago these persons, who now walk by faith as strangers and pilgrims, were dwelling in consideration and comfort, in Ur of the Chaldees, a region lying behind yonder mountain-range, between the sources of the Euphrates and the Tigris. Idolatry universally prevailed there, though little more than three centuries have passed away since the judgment of God against sin had brought in the flood upon the world of the ungodly. So strong is the tendency of man's heart to depart from the true God !

To prevent the entire prevalence of idolatry over the whole earth, and to establish a permanent witness for Himself, the All-wise God determines to deal in a different way from that in which He had already dealt with man. He therefore elects one man to be the progenitor of an elect nation whom He will separate to Himself, to perpetuate His worship, to be the recipient of His revealed will, and especially to be the channel through which, according to the flesh, shall be born at the appointed time, the promised Seed of the woman, God over all, blessed for evermore.

For this purpose the Divine sovereignty selected Abram, the son of Terah, and called him out from his kindred, and his father's house, to an acquaintance with Himself as the Living God. Not that this was owing to any fitness or worthiness on the part of Abram ; he was doubtless by practice an idolater like his fellows, till the distinguishing grace of God found him. The favour of God is the origin of, and can never spring from, any goodness in man ; and

Abram would never have sought the Lord, if the Lord had not first sought him. But a divine and quickening power accompanied the call; like his illustrious descendant ages afterwards, he was obedient to the heavenly vision; and thus became the Father of the faithful, and the Friend of God.

The God of glory who appeared to Abram in Mesopotamia, and separated him from his natural relationships, did not reveal to him whither he was to go. The terms of the summons were these: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, *unto a land that I will show thee.*" What a trial must this have been to faith! For a man of substance to pack up all his goods, muster his dependents, take his cattle with him, and depart for a foreign land, without being able to inform his wondering neighbours of even so much as the name, the position, or the distance of the region to which he is going! All he could tell them was, that a Being, whom they indeed knew not nor recognised, but in whose wisdom, skill, power, faithfulness, and love he had implicit confidence, had commanded the journey, and had promised to be his guide and protector.

And is not this conduct imitated by every one who has set out for the celestial Canaan? Originally dead in sins, and ignorant of God, he has been made to hear a gracious call to come out and be separated from that which is of the present world. The power of the Holy Ghost, quickening him into new life, has

accompanied the call, and enabled him to obey it. Henceforth his back is upon the world, and the eye of his faith is upon the goodly inheritance by-and-by to be revealed. Where it is he knows not; none that have ever been there before have returned to describe it to him; he cannot tell how near it is, or how distant, nor when he shall arrive at it; but he goes forward, looking to the shepherd-care of his Lord and Saviour, who he is sure will guide him aright, will not let him want by the way, and will bring him safely, and by the best road, to his heavenly rest.

The call of Abram had occurred several years before the period of the scene which we have described, and he had at once set out upon his journey. His aged father, Terah, and his brother Nahor, had accompanied him, perhaps persuaded, like the youthful Lot, by the testimony of their relative, to acknowledge and obey the true God. Certain it is that when, long afterwards, the sacred historian leads the reader back to Mesopotamia, the name of Jehovah is recognised among Terah's descendants, and the God of Abram is called also the God of Nahor, and the God of their father. Often, when the sovereign grace of God has singled out an individual from a godless family, it is that the favoured one may be a channel of blessing to the rest; and the conversion of a whole household has frequently resulted from that of a single member of it. Yet neither Terah nor Nahor ever crossed the Euphrates: they remained "on the other side of the flood" all their

days; the increasing infirmities of the former, and perhaps the supineness and love of ease of the latter, prevailed to put an early period to the pilgrim walk that they had undertaken. For fifteen years the migration of Abram and Lot was thus delayed, during which time the whole family resided at Charran. But now the aged Terah has gone the way of all flesh; Nahor is unwilling to remove again; and Abram has received a second intimation from the Lord Jehovah, that country and kindred are to be finally forsaken.

Henceforth the patriarch has done with cities and with houses; a stranger and a pilgrim dwelling in tents, is to be henceforth his character. And even when he comes to the Land of Promise, he is still to walk by faith through it, in the same character. For it is to be at present to him but the Land of Promise, not of Possession. The Canaanite is in it, and must not just yet be dispossessed; and until then, the friend of God, though assured that it is his inheritance, has no more than a tent and a pasture in it. He will look onward "for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God."*

All this is beautifully illustrative of the walk of a Christian. When he first turned his back upon the world in which he was born, and in whose pleasures

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* The definite article, though omitted in our English Version. is in the original before each noun, and makes the allusion to the New Jerusalem of Rev. xxi. much more distinct and definite.

and pursuits he was for a while engrossed, he did not immediately get into the Canaan of rest. Many delays intervene, and often through many years he has to sustain the stranger and pilgrim character, passing *through* the world, but not *of* it. He knows that by-and-by "the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace;" he is assured that a time is coming when over this wretched and sin-stricken world, where now Satan rules, the peaceful and happy reign of Jesus shall be extended, whose right it is; and he has been promised that he shall bear a part in the glory of his reigning Lord. But meanwhile, "the Canaanite is in the land;"—this world is in the possession of those with whom he can have no fellowship, because they reject his Master. He "abides in tents;" he has no home, no permanent resting-place here, but looks forward, like his great prototype, the faithful Abram, to the city of the all-glorious foundations, that Holy City, the New Jerusalem.

Genesis XXIV.

LET us suppose the lapse of threescore years, and again take our stand at this same ford of Euphrates. A train of camels slowly approaches along the winding path that leads from the Syrian desert, the very track along which Abram had gone before, but in the opposite direction. The beasts are attired in sump-

tuous housings, and bear rich ornaments on their necks and on their head-gear: some of them carry the peculiarly formed saddle which is used by ladies of rank and station; but no female is in the troop. A venerable man is mounted on the foremost camel, and the rest of the company are evidently attendants. They cross the ford; the old man looks round with that expression of mingled curiosity and gratification with which we recognise objects and scenes once familiar, but half-forgotten; but the train pursues its way, winds up the opposite slope, and is presently lost to view in the rocky gorge that leads the traveller to the Upper Mesopotamia.

Three days afterwards, the quiet of the secluded valley is again broken by the tinkling of the camels' bells, and the same train is seen returning. No difference is perceptible in the company, except that now the most richly caparisoned dromedary carries a young and beautiful lady, and several other females accompany and follow her. The venerable conductor rides by her side, and entertains her with conversation, which to judge from her smiles, and the colour that comes and goes upon her blushing cheek, is both interesting and agreeable. They quickly pass; we trace their diminishing forms for a while; until at length the summit of yonder hill conceals them from our sight, and enables them to catch a view of the desert across which they have to travel on their way to Canaan.

The history of this expedition is touching and in-

structive. Abraham has been blessed with a son, the Child of Promise, who has now attained mature age. The patriarch, now striken in years, looks on his beloved son, the heir of his possessions, and the heir of his piety too, the son to whose line the promised blessing is expressly appropriated, and desires to see him wedded to a suitable wife. But where shall he find a help, meet for a man of God? Not among the filthy inhabitants of the land in which he dwells: not among the daughters of the idolatrous Canaanites, the licentious worshippers of Baal-peor. From these can never be expected any help or comfort to a servant of Jehovah, nor the bringing up of a "godly seed." The surrounding nations are little better, all being plunged into the grossest vice and the most debasing idolatry.

But intelligence has recently been brought to the anxious patriarch from his native country, Mesopotamia. He learns that the family of his brother Nahor are flourishing at Charran, and, what is still better, that they are leading, in virtuous simplicity, a pastoral life, and that they have preserved, in some degree of purity, the knowledge and the worship of Jehovah. Here then he determines to seek a bride for his beloved son.

He calls his long-tried, faithful steward, the aged Eliezer, born and bred up in his family, who had originally accompanied him in his migrations, and whose feelings, affections, and interests are identified with his own. To him the careful parent reveals his

purpose, and to him he confides its execution. The custom of the country and of the age prescribes such a proceeding. Marriage is a subject of negotiation, not between the bride and the bridegroom themselves, whose inclinations it is not considered essential previously to consult, but between the parents or families of the interested parties. Proposals are made frequently through the medium of confidential servants, who have authority to conclude the negotiation. Another thing contrary to Western notions of delicacy, but immemorially the custom in the East, is the purchase of the bride from her family, at a stipulated price, varying of course according to her personal qualifications and rank in life.

We have said that the faithfulness and devoted attachment of Eliezer have been long tried: the entire government of his master's house is in his hand; but, on an occasion so important as the present, Abraham cannot be satisfied without the solemnity of an oath. The cautious domestic, however, desires to know what will be his duty, on the supposition that he shall not be able to find a female of his master's kindred who will be willing to come with him. Abraham frees him from his obligation in such a case, but nevertheless assures him that he needs not fear; for that Jehovah, who took him from his father's house, and had given him great and precious promises, will surely send His angel with his messenger and prosper his way. How beautiful is this confidence in God! Both of these men are experiment-

ally acquainted with the love and faithfulness of Jehovah ; but the faith of Abraham is stronger than the faith of Eliezer !

The oath is given, and the trusty servant departs with a train of attendants suitable for the high mission, and with jewels of gold and silver, and valuable raiment, as presents for the intended bride and her relatives. The journey is long, but the trained dromedaries swiftly cross the Syrian desert, and arrive at the frontier of Mesopotamia, where we have found the procession. We will follow the venerable steward on until he reaches the city of his destination, Charran, where still reside the descendants of Nahor. It is evening tide ; but, before he enters the town, he tarries a while by the well, which, as usual, is situated outside the gate. It is the time when the women of the city come out to draw water ; a duty which, though burdensome, is invariably assigned to females, and is the less disliked because it affords them almost the only opportunity they possess of meeting together for cheerful intercourse. None of them are yet arrived ; and Eliezer determines to spent the few minutes that may intervene, in prayer. Accordingly, he makes his tired camels to kneel down, their usual mode of taking rest ; while he, reverently standing, wrestles with God for a token of blessing. His solemn appeal is to Jehovah, the God of his master Abraham ; and it is for his master's sake that he pleads for a prosperous issue ; he disclaims his own judgment in so important a matter, but seeks to find

the damsel whom God has appointed for his young master; and finally he ventures to ask for a sign whereby he may with certainty know the Divine decision. "Behold," he says, "I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that Thou hast showed kindness unto my master."

Is not the example of Eliezer worthy of imitation by every godly man engaged in any undertaking involving important consequences? We are taught, whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do it all to the glory of God. Therefore we should seek earnestly to know the mind of God, even in the things that concern the present life; since there is nothing in which a child of God may lawfully engage, on which he may not ask his heavenly Father's direction and blessing. And he should expect to have it too; asking in faith, nothing wavering. Let him watch the leadings and indications of God's providence; and the promise is clear and explicit, that wisdom *shall be given* to him who thus asks it. The written Word, which Eliezer had not, is now a Christian's rule of conduct; and, either by precept or principle, it will meet every general case. To be looking for manifest signs at every turn would be now to walk by sight

instead of by faith; yet he who habitually carries his undertakings and designs, his difficulties and uncertainties to God, will not lack special instances of interposition and direction, which, however trivial they might seem if reported to others, will to himself prove occasions of adoring wonder and praise.

According as the good man prayed, so it comes to pass. Even before he has done speaking, a lovely

WOMEN AT WELL.

virgin comes forth bearing her pitcher *on her shoulder*, a little circumstance indicative of her high station, as the daughter of a lordly house; the women of inferior rank habitually bearing the pitcher upon the head. Her exceeding beauty and grace are equalled only by her simplicity and modest affability. The servant runs to meet her, hoping that one so fair may indeed

prove the destined bride; he prefers his request, and receives the ready answer that his faith had prescribed. He gratefully slakes his thirst at her pitcher; and then, in silent admiration not only of the lovely maiden but also of the goodness of the Hearer of prayer, looks on while she with sweet alacrity runs again and again down the steep steps of the well, and fills the trough with water, until the thirsty beasts are satisfied. Surely Eliezer showed his wisdom in the qualities which he desired to secure in a wife for his master's son, and which his description implied! Simplicity, industry, humility, kindness, affability, hospitality, readiness in obliging, and cheerfulness in service,—how valuable are these qualifications; and how far superior to mere beauty of face or form, or what, according to the fashion of this present world, are considered feminine accomplishments!

The whole business is now soon decided. The maiden, on being asked her parentage, declares herself to be Rebekah, the granddaughter of Nahor, and invites the stranger to her father's house. He immediately invests her with some of the precious jewels, —a nose-ring and bracelets of gold, which he had brought for the purpose; and declares his own relation to Abraham. The negotiation with the family involves a revelation of Abraham's greatness and wealth, and that Isaac is his sole heir, as also of all the wondrous interpositions by which Jehovah had marked out Rebekah as the destined bride. The family consent to the marriage; the maiden herself

is willing to go ; and without any delay,—for the servant is anxious to fulfil his mission,—she sets out with him on his return, trusts herself to his protection and guidance across the dreary desert, cheered doubtless by many a detail of the greatness and paternal kindness of Abraham, and of the gentleness and love of Isaac, as they travel together.

In this interesting transaction we have not only a picture of the pastoral life of antiquity, drawn with inimitable simplicity and beauty by the pen of inspiration, and valuable moral and spiritual instruction given in a lively and attractive manner,—but also a precious type of the greatest mystery of grace, the preparation of the Church for Christ, and her presentation to Him. The Father loveth the Son, even that only-begotten and well-beloved Son whom He hath once given up, with His own free and perfect consent, as a sacrifice. He "hath given all things into His hand," so that the Son can say, "All things that the Father hath are mine." But, to consummate the joy, the Father determines to "make a marriage for His Son;" and, having chosen a bride out of a distant land, He sends forth the Holy Ghost to persuade her to "forget her own people and her father's house." He, in obedience to the Father's will, finds her out, tells her of all the glory of the Father's house, which is also the glory of Jesus, and thus makes her willing to forsake all, and to travel through the wilderness with Him for her guide and comforter. Then He covers her with a spotless robe of righteousness, and adorns

her with gifts and graces, the pledge-jewels of Jesus' love, and of her betrothal to Him; and thus He conducts her home, cheering her as she goes along, with thoughts of Him to whom she is going; "taking of the things that are His and showing them to her," and "showing her things to come," even the glory which she shall share, when, presented at length as a chaste virgin to Christ, the marriage day shall come, and she shall be manifested as one with Him, in everlasting union, to the praise of His glorious grace.

Daniel II.

THE most renowned city of antiquity was Babylon. We have already glanced at its early foundation by Nimrod, the grandson of Ham, and the confusion of which it was the scene. We will now look at it as it was in its maturity, "the golden city," "the lady of kingdoms," "the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency."

It was situated in a vast plain watered by two great rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris, the former of which ran through its centre, dividing it into two portions. Its form was that of a square of 480 stadia, or 60 miles in circumference, each side being 15 miles in length. A wall encompassed it 350 feet in height and 87 in thickness. An idea may be formed of this wall, by comparing it with the dome of St. Paul's, which is about equal in height, and by saying that its breadth was considerably more than half as much

again as that of London Bridge. A moat surrounded the whole, deep and wide, and always filled with clear water from the Euphrates. We must not suppose that the whole of the immense space within the walls was occupied, as it would be in a modern European city, with streets and squares; extensive fields were embraced in this area, which were intended to supply the inhabitants with corn in the event of a siege. A hundred massive gates of brass, at regular distances, gave ingress and egress to the thousands that were constantly pouring in and out of the city; each of these gates was the extremity of a street, which traversed the city in a straight line. There were thus fifty streets, intersecting each other at right angles, besides lanes and alleys innumerable; the houses were generally three or four stories in height. Transverse avenues led down to the river, pierced through a wall or breastwork of brick, and closed by smaller brazen gates. The Euphrates, which was nearly a quarter of a mile wide, was crossed by a bridge of stone.

In the centre of one of the divisions of this vast city, stood that mighty monument of early audacity, the Tower of Babel. It seems never to have been carried beyond the height which the first builders attained; but the topmost turret, the eighth in succession, was used as a chapel, and devoted to Bel or Belus, the national idol. No statue was in this apartment, which contained only a magnificent couch and a table of solid gold; but in other chambers of

the buildings there were colossal images, altars, and thrones, of the same precious metal.

The centre of the other division, separated from the former by the river, was occupied by the royal palace. It was a structure of prodigious magnificence, one particular of which it may suffice to mention. The queen of Nebuchadnezzar was a native of Media, a mountainous country and well wooded, and in these respects the very opposite of Babylonia. To please her and gratify her taste for rural scenery, this prince formed hanging gardens, terrace above terrace, until they equalled the height of the walls of the city. These he planted and laid out in the most costly manner, with flowers, shrubs, and trees, brought from distant parts of his dominions. The most gigantic forest-trees flourished in these paradises; for they were built on hollow piers of brickwork, sixty feet square, which were filled with earth. Thus support to the stupendous structure was afforded, and at the same time sufficient space was allowed for the roots of the most spreading trees.

A few years ago an interesting discovery was made by our countryman, Mr. Rich, while exploring the ruins of ancient Babylon. In the Mujelibè, a vast shapeless heap much like the Birs Nimroud, supposed to have been this royal palace, he excavated one of these supporting shafts. It was a "hollow pier, sixty feet square, lined with fine brick, laid in bitumen, and filled up with earth."

The fertility of the surrounding country was al-

most without a parallel. Rich by nature, the productiveness of the soil was greatly increased by irrigation, the region being crossed by numerous canals that connected the waters of the Tigris with those of the Euphrates; and these were again intersected by a multitude of smaller channels, whence the water was distributed partly by manual labour and partly by hydraulic engines. Thus the three requisites of fertility, a rich soil, abundant moisture, and a hot climate, combined to render Babylonia the most fruitful region of the whole East. Corn was its chief staple, of which a two-hundred fold increase was the common expectation; and in favourable seasons it occasionally reached three hundred, the grain, besides, being of prodigious size; an astonishing return, which the historian is almost afraid to record lest he should be suspected of exaggeration.

And now let us in imagination turn to the centre of all this glory, where Nebuchadnezzar, the mightiest of earth's monarchs, sits in the marble halls of his royal palace. A magnificent apartment extends before us, of lofty height and immense length, along each side of which runs a series of columns of white marble. The broad avenues separated by this colonnade are ceiled with cedar, painted in a rich pattern with blue and vermilion; but the still broader central area is open to the sky, the clear cloudless azure of the serene heavens forming its majestic roof. The walls are panelled with enormous slabs of alabaster, series above series, the lower compartments sculp-

tured with eagle-headed figures representing the objects of idolatrous worship, or the monarch as the high priest engaged with his subordinate priests in various acts of religious homage. The upper panels

EAGLE-HEADED IDOL.

are painted in the most vivid colours, representing in colossal proportions the exploits, real or imaginary, of the monarch himself. In one place he is seen in his war-chariot leading-on his warriors to battle; in

another he is slaying with his own hand the adverse chieftain; then he is depicted driving his conquered foes before him, and transfixing them with his arrows; or besieging a fortified city; or fording a broad and rapid river; or returning in triumphal pomp to his palace with the trophies of conquest. Or the exciting scenes of the battle-field are exchanged for the sports of hunting; the royal hunter, like his illustrious ancestor, the founder of his kingdom, pursues in his chariot the wild bull and shoots him to the heart; or on foot seeks the maned lion in his lair, and, engaging him in single combat, slays him with his short sword.

To the upper parts of the marble pillars are attached rings of massive silver, through which pass cords of purple silk intertwined with silver thread; on these hang curtains richly embroidered with figures and scenes analogous to those on the walls, but wrought in purple on white silk; they are gathered into graceful folds by loops of silken cord, revealing the luxuriously cushioned divâns that range along the walls. The pavement is of porphyry and alabaster set in various fantastic forms and labyrinthine patterns, reflecting from its polished surface the glittering columns, the painted figures of the walls, and the placid blue sky above all.

On each side of the portal of this noble hall, stands, like a guardian demon, a form of grand and awful aspect. The stature is thrice that of man, and the proportions are conformable to it. It is one of

those compound embodiments by which the human mind has sought to exhibit to sense the abstract attributes of the Divinity. The head and visage are those of man, full of intelligence and grandeur; the body and limbs are those of a lion, the representative of strength and ferocity; and from the back rise the wings of an eagle, expanding their ample plumes, the symbol of clear-sighted omniscience, of omnipresence, and of wide dominion.*

At the upper extremity of the room stand in like manner two other cherubic figures, and between them, on an elevated daïs, is placed the royal throne. It is constructed of ivory richly carved and inlaid with gold; crouching lions form the arms, and the feet terminate in lions' claws. A footstool of similar materials stands before it, and above it is suspended the winged globe, another symbol of deity.

On the throne, the centre and object of a homage scarcely less than adoration, sits the monarch. He is in the prime of vigorous life, a man of tall and martial figure, whose noble features bear the impress

* In the above description we have not scrupled to make use of the recent interesting discoveries of the ancient Ninevite marbles. In the customs of two nations so nearly related in time, in situation, in origin, and in language, as Assyria and Babylon, we may be permitted, in the absence of any contrary evidence, to suppose a close similarity. The more so, as the remains of a much more distant region, Egypt, exhibit many points of remarkable resemblance. The compound forms, in particular, a bestial body with wings and a human countenance, are found in the monuments of Nineveh, Thebes, and Persepolis.

of power, and tell of one born to be a king of kings. His commanding height is increased by his conical turban, from which long tassels depend behind. He is clad in a robe of white linen richly embroidered with pictures of his own exploits, and girded with a knotted girdle of twined silk, from which the chased haft of a dagger projects, blazing with precious stones. Golden figures of the sun, moon, and stars are hung as a necklace around his neck, and armlets of the same metal, with rams' heads for clasps, encircle his muscular arms and wrists, which are otherwise naked. His right hand grasps with energy a ponderous mace of bronze, fashioned at the end into a globe.

Eunuchs richly attired stand around the king: one holds over his royal master a parasol of silk; another fans him continually with a tuft of ostrich plumes; and others carry his arms, his bow and quivers, his javelins, his sword and spear, and his shield.

Priests too are here in groups around the throne: they also are clad in embroidered robes, and wear caps or turbans, each adorned with a silver horn; they all bear implements of worship, cups, cones of the pine-tree, baskets, and other mysterious emblems, and some are furnished with ample spreading wings attached to their shoulders. Princes and satraps clothed in scarlet, and bearing golden chains of office, mingle with the priests; and, behind them, at respectful distance, are the military chiefs and chosen captains, glittering in coats of scale-armour, with close-fitting helmets of the same falling down

over the shoulders and neck, each of them girt with his sword upon his thigh, and his spear in his hand.

Profound silence reigns throughout the hall, and every countenance is turned upon the monarch in fear and uncertainty. At the foot of the throne are six white-bearded men, clad in long white robes, all of them with their foreheads on the ground in the most abject humiliation. In the midst of them stands a youth, tall and comely, indeed, but scarcely arrived at man's estate, whose fair and ruddy face shows as yet no traces of a beard. In the splendour of that court he stands erect and unabashed, not with an impudent gaze, but with a noble gravity of demeanour that commands involuntary respect. His features are not cast in the same mould as those of the company around, and when he speaks it is with the accent of a stranger; yet he is clothed with a white robe in all respects similar to those of the aged men whose faces are on the ground.

Chagrin and anger are strongly depicted in the countenance of the monarch; for he has been perplexed by a dream, the solemn effect of which remains on his mind, though the particulars resist all his efforts to recall them. In his perplexity he demands the aid of his magicians, whose claims to supernatural knowledge he commands them to prove by the reproduction of his vision. But they are helpless, and the vehement rage of the king has just been vented in threats of degradation and instant death. These are the men who, in the most pitiable

prostration of body and mind, seek to mollify the vehemence of the royal indignation.

In this crisis, the captain of the guard has just brought-in Daniel, a youthful Jewish captive, in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God ; who modestly but confidently professes his ability to make known to the king both the dream and the interpretation. Yet not to himself does he arrogate the glory, nor does he pretend to any superior wisdom of his own, but points to the Living God as the only revealer of secrets, who thus makes known to Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.

The subject of the forgotten vision had been a great and splendid image. Its head was of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of brass, its legs of iron, its feet part of iron and part of clay. Presently a stone cut out of a mountain without hands, smote the image upon its feet, and the whole splendid figure instantly crumbled to dust, and was carried away by the wind of heaven ; while the stone that smote it became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

This mysterious vision is now explained by the youthful prophet. It was a revelation of the five great empires, which commencing with the times then present should reach onward to the end of the world.

The Babylonian monarchy was represented by the head of this image ; which, on account of its surpassing grandeur, wealth, and magnificence, was repre-

sented as made of gold. After a little while this should be overthrown, and succeeded by another kingdom, that of the Medes and Persians, here symbolised by the breast and arms of silver; which should be inferior to the former in all that dazzles and attracts the attention of this world. But the Persian monarchy was destined to yield to the Macedonian, represented by the belly and thighs (or sides) of brass; a metal peculiarly suitable to prefigure the Grecians, inasmuch as it was the material of which their armour was made, ("the brass-coated Greeks"); and their dominion, while lacking in wealth and splendour, was obtained and supported by the extraordinary military power of Alexander. At length this also should succumb to the iron monarchy of Rome, which, despising wealth, magnificence, and luxury, should establish its wide dominion by a stern, unrelenting, ferocious valour, grinding the nations without pity or mercy. The government, so long vested in two equal consuls and at length in two emperors, might be well expressed by the legs of the image, and the ten toes might prefigure the ten Gothic kingdoms into which the whole empire should at length be broken up. Some of these kingdoms are powerful, retaining the old iron character of martial Rome; others are weak and degenerate, fit only to be compared to miry clay.

Here then is an epitome of the world's history from the epoch of King Nebuchadnezzar. It reaches down to us; for the ten monarchies of the Roman

world, which have existed now for twelve centuries, have not yet passed away. We stand then upon the very extremity of the last division of the great image ; not only upon the toes, but, so to speak, upon the very tips of the toes. What a solemn thing it is to look into God's infallible almanack of prophetic history, and to see our own place there! For we cannot but perceive that, according to the vision, the dominion of these ten kingdoms is not to run on indefinitely, but to come to a sudden, violent, and total extinction.

The fifth kingdom, represented by the mighty stone, was to differ in important respects from the preceding four. They were earthly in their origin and character, this was to be heavenly ; they were characterized by qualities that the natural mind appreciates,—splendour, riches, magnificence, military skill, and brutal force ; this, like a small stone from the face of a mountain, seems worthless and mean, yet it shall fill the whole earth : they were each destined to pass away, and yield to a superior ; this shall never be removed, but shall stand for ever. The stone is the Lord Jesus Christ, despised and cast out by men, but elect and precious in the sight of God, and destined to "grind to powder" (Matt. xxi. 44) whomsoever it shall fall upon. The world is pluming itself on its advancing liberty, its discoveries, its science, its intellect, its power ; and is flattering itself with the hope of ages of prosperity to come ; "to-morrow shall be as this day, and much

more abundant." But what says the great dial of prophecy? The circle of its hours is well-nigh completed, and its silent finger is pointing to a period that cannot be far off, when "the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold," all that is considered great and valuable by the world, shall be "broken to pieces, and become like the chaff of the summer threshing floors," by Him whose name it loves not to hear, and whose authority it rejects and scorns.

Yet most blessed is it to the Christian, the "scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," to know that the reign of his Lord and Saviour is fast approaching. With the world's glory he has, or ought to have, no fellowship, as well knowing who is the "prince" and "god of this world"; nor can he regret that its termination is nigh, seeing that it has ever been in opposition to the glory of Jesus. Meanwhile, his duty is now quiet subjection to authorities and powers for the Lord's sake; not resisting evil, nor seeking to set right by force that which he sees wrong; contented to suffer with Christ, knowing that he shall also reign with Him.

"Babylon, with its eagle-wings of pride, has appeared and fallen. Persia, with its two-fold dynasty, has succeeded in its turn. The mighty invasion of Xerxes has been fulfilled, and become the theme of poets and orators, a proverb of history, for more than two thousand years. The empire of Macedon, and the triumphs of Alexander, have appeared on

the shifting scene of history, and vanished away. Rome, the fourth and mightiest empire, strong as iron, has risen to power, and, after stamping its name deep on the world's calendar, has been broken as here announced, and lived on, though rent and divided, surrounded with the monuments of its departing glory. And thus, in the steady sweep of Providence, we are brought to the verge of that predicted kingdom which shall not be given to another people, but wherein the dominion shall be given to the saints of the Most High, and they shall reign for ever and ever. If such glorious hopes of the triumph of Divine goodness in this lower world dazzle and confound us by their brightness when they are set before us in general and abstract promises, here they are blended-in with the whole range of history; and all the events recorded in profane historians, and by the orators and poets of Greece and Rome, become so many pledges to us of that everlasting kingdom which God has promised to them that love Him. Our hopes may thus rove freely through all the magnificent range of coming ages of blessedness, and yet, all the time, retain a firm anchor-hold upon every main event of recorded history for two thousand years."*

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* Birks' Elem. of Prophecy, p. 429.

Psalm CXXXVII. Jeremiah LI.

BENEATH the willows that droop their long pendent branches into the murmuring river, as if weeping in sympathy with those that seek their sombre shade, sit a group of mourners. They are strangers in a strange land, the captive daughters of Judah, who have sought a brief respite from the insulting scorn of their cruel oppressors, demanding mirth from their broken hearts. How can they sing Jehovah's song in a strange land? or how shall they tune their harps to the praise of that Name which the haughty heathen only demand to hear that they may treat it with derision? They have hanged their harps upon the willows, where the mournful breeze sighing through the branches sweeps over the strings, and awakens low and plaintive chords, in unison with their sorrowful thoughts.

They sit in silence, for their hearts are too heavy for converse: their heads are covered with their long enveloping veils, or they bury their faces in their hands, while the tears flow fast from their eyes. They remember Zion; the happy days when they dwelt in her palaces, clothed in scarlet, with many delights; when the noise of the pipe, and the tabret, and the viol was in their feasts, and their light hearts thought not of the approach of evil. They remember the glorious temple, the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth: its priestly ministrations, its holy service; whither they habitually went up to

join in the solemn worship, and to swell the pealing chorus of praise that ascended to Jehovah from assembled multitudes keeping holy-day. But the spoiler has been let loose upon Zion; her palaces and her strongholds lie level with the ground; and the adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: a fire hath been kindled in Zion, and hath devoured even its foundations. The house of the Lord is utterly desolate, it is overthrown and burned with fire; Jehovah hath abhorred His sanctuary, and given it into the hand of the heathen; He hath despised, in the indignation of His anger, the king and the priest. The sons and daughters of Jerusalem, the thousands of Judah, are violently carried away captive; and the city sits solitary that was full of people. No daily lamb smokes on the brazen altar; no songs ascend now from the courts of the Lord's house; silence is within those blackened walls, for they who were wont with joy to minister there have sprinkled with their blood its hallowed stones, or are sitting in the dust in sackcloth and ashes, in this alien land. The proud idolater has triumphed in the heritage of Jehovah, and blasphemously ascribed his success to his senseless idols.

Ah! these are sad recollections for the poor pining captives; but there are thoughts that will obtrude themselves, that are far, far more bitter. Why is Jehovah thus dishonoured, His sanctuary polluted, His worship profaned, His city destroyed, His people

carried into captivity? Hath His promise failed? Hath He forgotten His faithfulness? or was He not able to maintain His own cause against the proud ones of the earth? It is for Israel's sin, that the Lord is wroth with His inheritance. His people have apostatized from Him, and turned to idols. "My people," saith Jehovah, "have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Yet had He borne long with them; He had solemnly admonished them, had sent unto them His prophets, with invitations to return to Him, with gracious offers of free forgiveness and full reconciliation, and with awful threatenings of His wrath if they persisted in disobedience. He had abundantly shown that judgment is His strange work, and that He delighteth in mercy. But they despised His long-suffering, poured contempt on His messages, stoned His prophets, and laughed to scorn His threatened wrath, till at length it arose, and there was no remedy. And now the rebellious people of God are in their enemies' land, left to mourn over their terrible sin and its consequences, if so be they will turn in their distress to Him from whom they have deeply revolted.

Meanwhile, Jehovah will take care of His own honour: brief shall be the scornful boasting of the heathen whom He hath used as the rod wherewith to smite His people; yet a little while, and Babylon, the queen of kingdoms, that saith, "I shall be a lady

for ever," shall become a perpetual desolation. The dreadful doom is already pronounced: Jehovah will soon avenge Himself on the senseless idols; Bel shall bow down, Nebo shall stoop, and on the backs of weary beasts shall go into captivity. Babylon, the proud, the mighty city, whose walls tower up to heaven, shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment and a hissing, without inhabitant.

Yonder comes one of the princes of the royal line of Judah; as he slowly walks along the rushy brink of the river, he often turns to gaze upon the lofty walls and loftier towers, the temples and palaces and brazen gates of the queenly city, and then takes a parchment roll from the bosom of his robe, and reads awhile therein. He approaches the willow-shade where the mourning captives sit, and addresses them in language of sympathy and consolation. He speaks of the covenant love of Him whose hand is heavy upon them; of His willingness to receive the penitent mourner; of His promise to hear the prayer of His people when in their enemies' land, and to turn their captivity; and gives them something to hope for, in the assurance that God hath recently limited the bondage of His people to seventy years. Then he speaks of the magnificent city before them,—how he has been round about it, to survey its strength, grandeur, luxury, pride, idolatry, cruelty, and sensuality; and tells them that he is the messenger of the Divine doom to guilty Babylon. And now he

takes from his bosom the roll of prophetic woe, which, has been commited to him by the venerable Jeremiah, and reads its awful burden in their hearing. Yet a little while, and this glorious city shall be utterly thrown down, and become a burnt mountain. It shall be overthrown like Sodom and Gomorrah, and be utterly desolate and forsaken. A great nation shall be raised up against her from the north, who shall rush upon her as a chafed lion driven from his thicket by the swelling of Jordan; a cruel nation, who will show no mercy; who will break her idols in pieces, slay her valiant men, and dash upon the stones her children. Her mighty river, her boast and pride, the source of her prosperity, shall be the instrument of her overthrow; for it shall be dried up before the advancing host, and its channel shall be their high-road into the city. The brazen gates shall open their ponderous valves to the conqueror, and he shall enter into the streets before the inhabitants are aware. One post shall run to meet another, to tell the King of Babylon that his city is taken at each end; that the passages are stopped, that the reeds are burned with fire, and that the men of war are affrighted. Anguish shall take hold of the monarch, and he and all his host shall utterly perish. Jehovah hath decreed wrath against Babylon, till it be wholly desolate; every one that goeth by shall be astonished at her plagues. "It shall never be inhabited, from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their

fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces." She shall be cast up as heaps; she shall be destroyed utterly; nothing of her shall be left.

These awful predictions, with many details apparently little likely to be fulfilled upon the flourishing metropolis of the world, the Divine messenger reads aloud; and, having finished, he binds a ponderous stone to the roll, and heaves it far into the bosom of the Euphrates. The surging waters close over it, and, as it sinks, the prophet lifts up his right hand to heaven, saying: "Thus shall that great city Babylon sink, to rise no more!"

Daniel v.

YEARS passed on, and the words which Seraiah had uttered were remembered—if remembered at all—by the Babylonians, only as the ravings of an angry enthusiast. The captives, too, had waited for their accomplishment, till they were weary of expecting, and most of them had now forgotten them. But not one jot or one tittle of God's word, whether of promise or threatening, can ever fail; and there were a few aged men in Babylon who still treasured up the words of solemn import, and expected, with an

earnest faith, their entire fulfilment. They remembered, also, the promised limitation of the captivity to seventy years, which period had now elasped since Nebuchadnezzar's first capture of Jerusalem.

The sound of revelry and mirth is in the royal palace; for there, in the magnificent hall where formerly Neuchadnezzar received the message from heaven, Belshazzar the king has made a feast to a thousand of his lords. It is night; but hundreds of lamps, fed with perfumed oil, and suspended by chains of gold, illuminate the glittering scene, and almost put out the radiance of the stars that sparkle in the purple sky above the heads of the revellers. Heaps of fragrant wood are burning on tripods of bronze, and mingle their rich odours with that of the sweet lotus-lilies that are set in porcelain vases, or hung in negligent wreaths around, in the greatest profusion. The charms of music are not wanting; the tabret and viol, the pipe and the harp, unite with many voices of men and women,—now in martial strains extolling the valour of the king, now sinking to softer melody, melting the soul to love. For on the embroidered couches recline many of the beauties of the Babylonian court, gracing with the charm of loveliness, if not of modesty, the festive scene. The incense, the music, and the wine are doing their work; the mirth is boisterous; the loud blasphemy or obscenity provokes the louder laugh, and the king is the merriest reveller of all. The grim countenances of the demon-gods around seem to glare with a fiendish expression,

and the shadowy forms of his royal ancestors frown down in silence from their lofty panels.

A sudden thought strikes the monarch's mind; and, amidst the drunken approbation of his guests, he commands to be brought the sacred vessels of gold and silver which had been plundered from the temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem. Hitherto they had

ANCIENT CUPS.

been preserved untouched; for Nebuchadnezzar, who had taken them away, had abstained from profaning them. The vessels are brought, and filled with sparkling wine; and while the unhallowed lips of the king, his princes, and his ladies, inhale the draught, the song of praise goes up from a thousand voices to the helpless idols of gold and silver and stone.

But what has suddenly arrested the monarch's loud laugh, and thrown an ashy paleness over his lately flushed cheek? See how his frame trembles as he clutches at the table for support; how his white lips quiver, and how his eyes are starting from their sockets as they stare upon the wall beside him! The uproar of the board is hushed, and every face is turned to the spot; and there, upon the alabaster wall, in the full glare of the great central lamp, is seen a cloudy hand. Slowly those ghostly fingers move along, and trace upon the polished slab, in the sight of the paralysed throng, mysterious characters; every letter distinctly visible, and flashing with coruscations of ghastly light.

The king cries aloud for his astrologers and soothsayers, offering the highest honours and rewards to him who shall decipher and interpret the mysterious writing. But the astrologers and soothsayers can only gaze in mute dismay, for all their wisdom is vain and worthless here. The confusion and terror have reached the apartments of the venerable widow of Nebuchadnezzar, who, though she would not give the sanction of her countenance to the indecent revelries of her grandson, approaches, in the hour of his anguish, to administer counsel and consolation. She remembers the heavenly wisdom of the Hebrew Daniel, when in his youth he interpreted the vision of the king that had baffled all the skill of Babylon; and she expresses her confident assurance that he will be able both to read and to interpret the mysterious writing.

And now, by the royal mandate, Daniel appears; not as when we first saw him in this hall, in the bloom of flowery youth, but bearing the burden of fourscore years. He listens to the king's demand, declines the proffered honours, but declares his ability to read the inscription. But first He faithfully rebukes the pride, ingratitude, idolatry, and blasphemy, which, refusing to profit by lessons of mercy, have provoked the righteous vengeance of the living God. The conscience-stricken monarch trembles under the word; he can offer no extenuation of his crimes thus set in order before him; but the joints of his loins are loosed, and his knees smite one against another as he gazes on the cloudy fingers slowly writing what he feels to be his own awful doom.

At length the hand has vanished, but the writing remains; and the prophet reads the words,—

"MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN."

And this is the interpretation,—

"MENE,—God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

"TEKEL,—Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

"PERES,*—Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."

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* The words literally signify "Number, number, weight, and divisions." PERES and UPHARSIN are essentially the same

Scarcely had the word of doom left the prophet's lips, before it was executed. In that night was King Belshazzar slain.

All through this reign there had been war between Babylon and the advancing power of the Medes and Persians. Cyrus, the Persian conqueror, had gradually been subduing the surrounding nations and the provinces of this kingdom, until at length this ancient and mighty city was the only place that held out against his victorious arms. Two years had the siege of Babylon now lasted; but such was the strength of the city, so high and massive the walls, so impregnable the fortifications, so great the number of warriors, so abundant the supplies of all kinds of provisions, that no hope seemed to exist that ever Cyrus would be able to effect an entrance. He had at first attempted to take it by assault, but in vain; and latterly had contented himself with cutting around it a trench, both wide and deep, hoping to starve it into surrender. But the city was provisioned for twenty years, and had besides open land enough within the walls, both for pasture and tillage, to supply the inhabitants for an indefinite period. The

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word, PERES being the radical word, the prefix U being merely the copulative "and"; PH and P are the same letter; the vowels are dubious, and the affix IN is the Chaldee plural termination. There is a sort of pun or paronomasia in the last term, the word PERES פרס signifying *Persia*, as well as *divide;* and the plural form may have expressed, as in an enigma, this double application.

river, moreover, was here so broad, that ships keeping in the middle of the channel could enter the city both from above and below; and thus the besiegers had the mortification of seeing supplies continually brought in, without being able to prevent it.

At length stratagem succeeded where force had

CYRUS TAKES BABYLON.

failed. Having learned that a great festival was approaching, which the Babylonians were accustomed to keep by devoting the whole night to revelry, drunkenness, and all sorts of disorder, Cyrus determined to surprise them in the midst of their debaucheries. One of the great works of Nebuchad-

nezzar had been the construction of an artificial lake above the city, for the sake of receiving the superfluous waters of the Euphrates in the annual floods. This lake was square, fifty-two miles every way, or upwards of two hundred in circumference, and in depth thirty-five feet; so that it was capable of holding an immense volume of water. Into this lake Cyrus determined to draw off the water of the Euphrates, and enter the city through the bed of the river. In the evening of this eventful night he sent up a party of men to cut the dam that separated the river from the lake, and then dividing his forces into two parts, he posted one division at the point where the river entered the city, and the other where it issued from it. Some hours elapsed before the waters were sufficiently shrunken to be fordable, though the Persian general had opened also his great trench. About midnight, however, the soldiers were able to march in the diminished stream, and entered the city. In the neglect and disorder of the festival, the brazen gates that led from the streets to the river had been carelessly left open, so that the armies met with no impediment, but marched up into the streets. The two parties met, according to agreement, at the royal palace, where they surprised the half-intoxicated guards, and soon despatched them.

The king, trembling under the judgment just pronounced upon himself and his kingdom, heard the noise from within, and commanded some to see what it meant. But no sooner was the great gate opened,

than the victorious Persians rushed in and took the palace; and the wretched monarch and his thousand lords were all put to the sword.

Thus did Jehovah avenge His own honour; and thus did He, according to His predictions, in the most marvellous manner, accomplish His purpose upon Babylon; and thus did He effect the deliverance of His people from captivity, after the lapse, as predicted, of exactly seventy years.

The glory of Babylon did not altogether depart when it was taken by Cyrus, though it then began to decline. The removal of the seat of empire to Shushan degraded it from the metropolis of the world to the head of a province; yet it still continued to retain its wealth, its grandeur, its temples, its sumptuous palaces, and its impregnable walls. The pride of strength impelled its inhabitants to revolt from Darius, the successor of Cyrus, and to raise the standard of independence. For several years they had been laying up stores, and when the Persian monarch brought up his army, they did not attempt to meet him in the field, but, shutting their hundred gates, defied his power. The horrible cruelty of putting the women and children to death, to save their provisions, leaving only one woman and a maid-servant in every house, did not avail them; for, by the stratagem of a pretended deserter from the Persian army, the gates were opened, after a siege of one year and eight months.

Now the queenly city was further humbled; for

the conqueror took away the hundred brazen gates, and beat down the lofty walls from two hundred cubits to a fourth part of that height. The spoil of the city was given up to the Persian army, and three thousand of the revolters were impaled.

A third time was Babylon taken by Alexander the Great. It no longer trusted in its fortifications, for the Persian commander surrendered it into the conqueror's hands without a blow. Its degradation was sufficiently proved when the inhabitants flocked upon the walls to see their new king take possession, unresisted, of their city. Here Alexander died soon afterwards.

Jehovah had declared that He would make Babylon "a possession for the bittern, and pools of water," and that "the sea should come up upon her, and she should be covered with the multitude of the waves thereof." The breaking down of the dam, by Cyrus, fulfilled in a remarkable manner these predictions; for when the lake was filled, the water of the river still continuing to enter at the breach, soon overflowed and deluged the surrounding country, spreading ruin and desolation over the whole region to the west of the Euphrates. From the same cause, the current of the river that passed through the city was so greatly diminished, as scarcely to suffice for the smallest boats, though large vessels used to navigate it. Alexander, who intended to make Babylon the seat of his empire, began to rebuild the dam, with a design to remedy the evil; but his death put a stop to the

ENVIRONS OF ANCIENT BABYLON.

work, which was never afterwards undertaken. Even now the western bank of the Euphrates, at this part, is not discernible, and the river flows unrestrained over the country, turning it into a vast morass, which remains covered with water long after the general subsidence of the stream.

This doomed city was again taken by Demetrius, the son of Antigonus, who ravaged the whole province. But its utter desolation was now at hand; for Seleucus soon afterwards built the city Seleucia, on the Tigris, which in a short time grew to vast size and grandeur. The shallowness of the Euphrates, and the inundation of the surrounding country, had made Babylon so inconvenient, that the new city soon drained it of its remaining inhabitants; a result which was aided by the political and municipal privileges conferred by Seleucus upon his own city. Thus in a short time afterwards Babylon became wholly deserted and desolate, nothing remaining of her but the empty houses and walls.

These remains of her ancient grandeur, however, resisted for many centuries the general ruin; for the walls, at least, were still standing in the fourth century after Christ. They served a singular purpose; for the whole area of the ancient city was turned into a park of wild beasts by the Parthian kings, who took their sport within the inclosure, the walls being preserved and repaired as the fence of this royal domain.

After this we hear no more of Babylon, till the

twelfth century, when Benjamin of Tudela found nothing left but "some ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's Palace," which men were afraid to approach, "by reason of the many serpents and scorpions that were there." In the sixteenth century, Rauwolf found some arches and ruins of the bridge which had once connected the parts of the city, on the opposite banks of the river, as well as the ruins of the palace, which, he also says, were full of venomous reptiles. Still more recently, the place has been often visited, and its present condition we shall hereafter briefly describe. Perhaps there is no spot upon the world's surface so awfully desolate as the silent plain of Shinar, strewn with its burnt and vitrified mounds, where once proud Babylon reared her diademed head to the skies, the centre whither thronged busy multitudes—the metropolis of the glory, wealth, and power of the world!

The Euphrates, whose history we have been tracing, is a great and majestic river, rolling its noble flood of waters through a course of nearly 2000 miles from its sources in the mountains of Armenia, to its termination at the head of the Persian Gulf. Two springs divide the honour of its origin; the more western known as the Kara-su, rises a little to the north of Erzeroum; the other, or eastern branch, which bears the name of the Murad-chai, flows from a point near Bayazid, far to the east. The name of Phrat (Eu-phrat-es), by which this magnificent river was distinguished in the very earliest

times, and which it still bears, is said to signify either *fruitfulness* or *dispersion*, the former term descriptive of the country through which it flows, the latter commemorative of its early history. The name appears to be applied to each of the branches, with the respective additions of Western and Eastern Phrat.

After flowing through many a wild glen and fertile valley of the mountainous Armenia, the two streams unite into one channel at the foot of the mountains, separated only by a narrow ridge from the source of the Tigris; and presently the full river precipitates itself through a cleft in this ridge, and pursues its way, hemmed in by lofty precipices, and interrupted by many bristling rocks, forming rapids and cascades. Its course is now nearly due south; and thus it forms the western boundary of the ancient Naharaim or Mesopotamia. On the east bank of the river is the modern town of Bîr, and not far from it is Urfah, considered to be the Ur of the Chaldees, the birthplace of Abraham.* Not far from Bîr, therefore, we may suppose to be the spot where the patriarch crossed the stream on his pilgrimage, as already narrated.

The town of Bîr has been visited by Mr. Buckingham, to whose travels we are indebted for the accompanying representation of its appearance. It contains

* Some modern inquirers, however, incline to place Ur much lower, even at the confluence of the Tigris with the Euphrates; then, possibly at the head of the Persian Gulf. Smith, "Anc. Hist.," i. 59. But this seems improbable.

about 4,000 inhabitants, and 400 houses, built on the side of a very steep hill. The Euphrates is here a strong and rapid river. Its width varies, at different seasons of the year, from 600 to 200 yards. Rauwolf, in 1575, considered it a mile broad; but Maundrell and Buckingham agree in comparing it with the Thames at London. The water is turbid, of a dull yellowish colour, and soon deposits an earthy sedi-

BÎR.

ment, if allowed to stand. The stream cannot be forded here, but large boats are used to ferry passengers and merchandise; and the natives often cross upon an inflated goatskin, which they tightly clasp with their hands, propelling themselves with the feet.

The Euphrates, now freed from all obstacles, maintains a steady and majestic course through a wide and verdant valley, and soon takes the south-east direction, which it afterwards pursues to the sea. Little of interest detains us on its banks till it enters the great Plain of Shinar, except the bituminous fountains of Hit, noticed by Herodotus, which are situated about seventy miles above. Through a level and now barren country, but once rich with luxuriant vegetation and everywhere covered with cultivation, the ancient river still flows on, till the ruins of old Babylon rise in uncouth and shapeless mounds upon the view. The traveller, at first sight, might suppose them to be natural hills of earth or rock; so immense are they, yet so shapeless, and so utterly unlike any work of human art. On close examination, however, their true character is discovered. On the east side of the river are two large mounds, and several smaller ones, formed by the decomposition of buildings, furrowed and channelled by the rains of centuries, and strewn with fragments of brick, bitumen, and pottery. To the north of these is an extensive heap, called Mujelibè, or "the overturned," about 140 feet in height, and half a mile in circumference. Traces of chambers, passages, and cellars are discernible, but all is a mass of confusion; "wild beasts and doleful creatures cry in the desolate houses, and dragons are in the pleasant palaces;" venomous reptiles of various kinds being very numerous in the ruins.

In another part of the ruins on this side of the

river stands the kasr or palace, a remarkable pile of brick architecture, so surprisingly fresh, that it was only on a careful and minute examination that Mr. Rich could be satisfied of its being a remnant of ancient Babylon. It consists of several thick walls strengthened with buttresses, built of fine burnt brick, still perfectly clean and sharp, imbedded in lime cement of such tenacity that it is almost impossible to extract a brick whole. Parts of it are split and overthrown, as if by an earthquake, and the whole is enveloped in an enormous mass of rubbish. Near it is an ancient tree, which the Arabs believe to have grown in Babylon itself, and to have survived its desolation. "It stands on a kind of ridge; one side of its trunk, with verdant branches at the top, alone remains. The branches waving in the wind produce a melancholy rustling sound. It is an evergreen, something resembling the lignum vitæ, and not common in Babylon. A tree of the same kind is said to grow at Bassorah."

On the western side of the Euphrates is the Birs Nimroud, "the most stupendous and surprising mass of all the ruins of Babylon." It is about ten miles to the south-west of the Mujelibè, and about six west of the river. But this wondrous remnant of antiquity we have already described in the words of Mr. Rich.

Travellers who have visited these majestic ruins speak in striking language of the awful impression which they convey, as forming an irrefragable proof of the power and omniscience of God, and of the

truth of His prophetic word. "I cannot portray," says Captain Mignan, "the overpowering sensation of reverential awe that possessed my mind while contemplating the extent and magnitude of ruin and devastation on every side." And on first entering its ruins, Sir Robert Ker Porter observes, "I could not but feel an indescribable awe in thus passing, as it were, into the gates of fallen Babylon."

The following vivid picture of the whole scene, drawn on the spot, is from the pen of the accomplished writer just named: "The whole view was particularly solemn. The majestic stream of the Euphrates, wandering in solitude, like a pilgrim monarch, through the silent ruins of his devastated kingdom, still appeared a noble river, under all the disadvantages of its desert-tracked course. Its banks were hoary with reeds, and the grey osier-willows were yet there, on which the captives of Israel hung up their harps, and, while Jerusalem was not, refused to be comforted. But how has the rest of the scene changed since then! At that time, those broken hills were palaces; those long undulating mounds, streets; this vast solitude, filled with the busy subjects of the proud daughter of the East. Now, wasted with misery, her habitations are not to be found; and, for herself, the worm is spread over her."*

Nearly opposite to the awful "*burnt mountain*," the Birs Nimroud, stands the modern town of Hillah.

* Travels, ii. 237.

It is built on both sides of the river, which is here not more than 430 feet wide (so is "the flood" diminished!), across which communication is maintained by a floating bridge of pontoons. The town is pleasantly situated amidst gardens and groves of date-palms; it is fortified, and contains about 7,000 inhabitants. Much of it, including its wall and numerous towers, is built of bricks, dug out of the ruins of Babylon.

HILLAH.

After passing another town, called Súk-el Shuyûkh, which contains 10,000 inhabitants, the Euphrates unites its majestic stream with that of its rival in celebrity, the Tigris, at a place called Korna, whence the united river forms a tidal channel, about half a

mile wide, called the Shat-el-Arab, or the river of Arabia, until about 100 miles farther down it reaches the Persian Gulf. A little above its debouchure, it passes the commercial city of Bassorah, containing about 20,000 inhabitants.

The late expedition under the command of Colonel Chesney, has greatly increased our knowledge of the Euphrates and the Tigris. The object was the establishment of steam communication with India, through one of these rivers, from the head of the Mediterranean. The materials and engines of two large iron steamers were, with immense labour, transported across the Syrian desert, to the Euphrates, near the town of Bîr, where they were put together. They were named after the names of the rivers, the *Euphrates* and the *Tigris*. The latter, unhappily, was overwhelmed and sunk in a dreadful hurricane, with the greater part of her brave crew; the former explored the river after which she was named, to its mouth; and then ascended the Tigris, to a distance of 400 miles above its junction with its sister stream.

In a course of 1,850 miles, from a lofty mountainous region, on the shores of the Black Sea, to the level plains at the head of the Persian Gulf, there must be considerable diversity in climate and productions. Near the sources of the river the cold is severe in winter, and the snow has been known to be two feet deep, and sufficiently drifted to bear a horse. Yet the valleys in summer are excessively hot, from the radiation of the sun's rays from the mountain-

sides. In the plains, the thermometer frequently rises in summer to 115° in the shade. Mr. Rich has seen it as high as 120° in the day, and 110° at night. The whole plain is subject to violent storms, one of which overwhelmed the *Tigris* steamer, as already mentioned.

The geological character of the mountainous regions is pretty uniform. Igneous rocks, of the later formations, predominate, with some of granitic structure. They are rich in metallic deposits. Mines of gold, silver, lead, copper, and iron are found; and on the west side of the Kara-su, boulders of native iron are met with, some of them three feet long, and a foot and a-half thick. Below the mountains, soft white chalk, with flints, composes the cliffs and banks of the Euphrates. The bitumen and naphtha fountains at Hit have been already noticed. In the great central plain the soil is pebbly; to this succeeds a clayey soil, covered with mould or sand; farther down are the Lemlun marshes, consisting of a soft alluvial mud, with many fresh-water shells. Below Bassorah, the soil is alternate mud and sand; and as we approach the Gulf, it is entirely of marine origin, and contains sea-shells. In some parts of this vicinity the surface is covered with salt, which lies like snow upon the ground, sometimes to the depth of an inch.

In the elevated plains at the sources of the Kara-su and the Murad-chai, there are no timber-trees; but farther to the south-west, in the recesses, and on

the declivities of the mountains, there are extensive forests of oak, groves of pines, firs, walnuts, and mulberries. Many of the valleys resemble gardens in the luxuriant beauty of their vegetation. The vine, fig, almond, and olive, the apple, pear, apricot, and plum yield abundant fruit; and wheat is cultivated with success. The plane-tree attains an enormous size. In spring, the ground is gay with the numerous liliaceous and other bulbous plants, and with orchideæ. Wormwood is very abundant on the east side of the river, as the camomile and camel-thorn are characteristic of the west. In the plains there is little wood; the date-palm is the only important tree, groves of which are very numerous in the lower course. Succulent plants are common; mesembryanthemums and asters clothe the great plain of Shinar; the broad pools of water are covered with water-lilies and ranunculuses, and are bordered with a luxuriant margin of reeds and rushes. Groves of tamarisks and acacias grow on the banks, and a species of poplar, with willow-like leaves (*gharah*), is abundant; of this kind may have been the "willows" (*garav*, ערב) on which the captives of Israel hanged their harps, though osiers and other species of the willow are also numerous.

The zoology of this region has not been very distinctly observed. The lion stalks over the plain, and Sir Robert Ker Porter was startled by the sight of two or three of these lordly animals standing on the very summit of the Birs Nimroud. Bears, wolves,

foxes, lynxes, and other beasts of temperate regions inhabit the mountains; and, in the southern plains, the leopard, the hunting-tiger, or cheeta, the hyæna, and the jackal pursue their prey. Herds of fallow deer inhabit some parts of the region, and the desert plains

JERBOA.

are ranged by gazelles and wild asses. The elegant jerboa, a creature somewhat like a rabbit, but with the motions of the kangaroo, leaps and burrows in the level tracts. The disproportion between its fore and hind limbs is very remarkable. Various breeds of domestic animals,—the camel, the horse, the ass,

the ox, the sheep, and the goat are cultivated. Otters are found both in the Euphrates and the Tigris. The bustard scours the lofty table-land at the heads of these rivers, as did the ostrich in ancient times; the latter is not now known in Asia. Pheasants, partridges, and quails are numerous, as are vultures, hawks, and owls. Many of the smaller birds familiar to Europe are common to these regions, as the thrush, lark, nightingale, and most of the finches; some species of kingfishers, of brilliant plumage, are peculiar to the river. Of the fishes and insects, we know but little, except that at the mouth of the Euphrates there is a very curious species of fish (*Lophius*), analogous to our own fishing-frog, which is able to leave the water, and crawl about for many hours upon the land; this it is enabled to do by the length of the bones of its pectoral and ventral fins, and by the peculiar structure of its gills, which can long retain the moisture necessary for respiration. Reptiles of many repulsive forms and venomous natures are particularly abundant in the heaps of ruins that strew the plain of Shinar, as has been already noticed.

Here we bring to a close our account of this renowned river and the region through which it flows. We have sketched the picture of its ancient, and that of its modern condition. Such it was once, —such it is now; and we cannot conclude with more forcible words than those in which a valuable writer thus sums up the contrast between the scene which

its rolling tide once witnessed, and that which it witnesses now,—

"From palaces converted into broken hills; from streets to long lines of heaps; from the throne of the world to sitting in the dust; from the hum of mighty Babylon to the death-like silence that rests upon the grave to which it is brought down; from the great storehouse of the world, where treasures were gathered from every quarter, and the prison-house of the captive Jews, where, not loosed to return homewards, they served in a hard bondage, to Babylon the spoil of many nations, itself taken from thence and nothing left; from a vast metropolis, the palace of palaces, and the glory of kingdoms, whither multitudes ever flowed, to a dreaded and shunned spot, not inhabited nor dwelt in from generation to generation, where even the Arabian, though the son of the desert, pitches not his tent, and where the shepherds make not their folds;—from the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, to the taking away of brick, and to an uncovered nakedness; from making the earth to tremble, and shaking kingdoms, to being cast out of the grave like an abominable branch; from the many nations, and great kings from the coasts of the earth, that have so often come up against Babylon, to the workmen that still cast her up as heaps, and add to the number of pools in her ruins; from the immense artificial lake, many miles in circumference, by means of which the annual rising of the Euphrates was regulated and

restrained, to these pools of water, a few yards round, dug by the workmen, and filled by the river; from the first and greatest of temples, to a burnt mountain desolate for ever; from the golden image, forty feet in height, which stood on the top of the temple of Belus, to all the graven images of her gods, that are broken unto the ground, and mingled with the dust; from the splendid and luxurious festivals of Babylonian monarchs, the noise of the vials, the pomp of Belshazzar's feast, and the godless revelry of a thousand lords, drinking out of the golden vessels that had been taken from Zion, to the cry of wild beasts, the creeping of doleful creatures, of which their desolate houses and pleasant palaces are full, the nestling of owls in cavities, the dancing of wild goats on the ruinous mound, as on a rock, and the dwelling-place of dragons, and of venemous reptiles; from arch upon arch, and terrace upon terrace, till the hanging gardens of Babylon rose like a mountain, down to the stones of the pit, now disclosed to view; from the palaces of princes, who sat on the mount of the congregation, and thought in the pride of their heart to exalt themselves above the stars of God, to heaps cut down to the ground, perforated as the raiment of those that are slain, and as a carcase trodden under feet; from the broad walls of Babylon, in all their height, as Cyrus camped against them round about, seeking in vain a single point where congregated nations could scale the walls or force an opening, to the untraceable spot on which they stood,

where there is nothing left to turn aside, or impede in their course, the worms that cover it; and, finally, from Babylon the great, the wonder of the world, to fallen Babylon, the astonishment of all who go by it: in extremes like these, whatever changes they involve, and by whatever instrumentality they may have been wrought out, there is not to this hour, in this most marvellous history of Babylon, a single fact that may not most appropriately be ranked under a prediction, and that does not tally entirely with its express and precise fulfilment; while at the same time they all united show, as may now be seen, reading the judgments to the very letter, and looking to the facts as they are, the destruction which has come from the Almighty upon Babylon." *

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* Keith's "Evidence of Prophecy," 359 (35th Edition).

II.

THE RIVER HIDDEKEL.

PHYSICAL HISTORY.

Site of Paradise — Pison — Gihon — Tigris — Topography—Nineveh—Assyria.

THE MISSION OF JONAH.

The City—the Painted Walls—The Throng at the Gate—the Woe—Royal Penitence—The Proclamation—The Petulant Prophet — Evening — Morning — The Fast — The Sheltering Gourd—The Divine Reproof—Corruption of the Heart—The Lord's Mercy.

SUBSEQUENT HISTORY.

Arbaces — Shalmaneser — Sennacherib — Esarhaddon — Nahum's Prophecy—The Fall of Nineveh—Recent Discoveries—Ruins—Sculptures—Other Relics—Truth of Prophecy.

THE LOWER RIVER.

Topography—Seleucia—Ctesiphon—Al Modain—Bagdad.

DANIEL'S VISION.

The Glory of the Lord—Its Effect upon Daniel—The Second Coming of Christ.

Genesis II.

THE site of the terrestrial Paradise, the garden of delights, which the beneficence of Jehovah planted for His creatures' residence, while innocent, has been defined by the inspired historian, by its connection with four rivers. Yet, notwithstanding the particularity with which three of these are described, great uncertainty involves the question, where it was actually placed. This obscurity arises from the difficulty of finding any two rivers answering to the Pison and the Gihon, in so close proximity to the Euphrates and the Hiddekel (or Tigris), as shall meet the requirements of the sacred text. It may indeed be that the flood, without destroying the channels of the Tigris and the Euphrates, has so altered the surface of the land that the two smaller rivers no longer exist; yet the impression of one who reads the Book of Genesis must certainly be that the sacred historian intended to identify the scene by geographical features, which existed at the time that he wrote. Some where upon the courses of the Euphrates and Tigris, we may safely assume that the garden was placed; but whether near the sources, or near the termination of these rivers, the opinions of the learned are conflicting.

There is scarcely any doubt, however, about the

identity of the Hiddekel, and none at all about that of the Euphrates. The latter is *simply mentioned*, as needing no description, being sufficiently familiar to the Hebrew people; and the name, Phrat, is the same by which it has been known in all ages to the present day. The Hiddekel is described as going eastward to Assyria (*marginal reading*); and the name, deprived of the aspirate, is essentially the same as that by which it is still locally known, Digl, Dijel, or Diljah; of which the word Tigris is merely a Greek modification. It is said to signify a dart, or swiftness; and is a characteristic epithet of this rapid river. Pliny indeed pretends to draw a distinction, by saying that the name of Tigris is applied to the river only where it flows rapidly, and that where its course is slow it is named Diglito; but Josephus affirms that the whole river is called Diglath.

The whole course of the Tigris, from its most remote source to the point where its waters mingle with those of the Persian Gulf, extends through a winding line of 1,250 miles; as it joins the Euphrates, however, at Korna, as before intimated, its proper length is about 100 miles less than this. The upper parts of the river, and the various mountain streams which combine to form its arrowy course, are not yet well investigated; but the principal of them rises on the southern side of the mountain range, at the foot of which, on the opposite side, rolls the Euphrates, already a majestic river; and not far from the point where it pours itself through a narrow gorge in the

mountain-chain, which there crosses its line. For 25 miles the Tigris flows to the north-east, maintaining an elevation of nearly 5,000 feet above the level of the Mediterranean; then, turning to the south-east for about 60 miles, reaches the Turkish town of Diarbekr, situated in a fertile plain, cultivated and occu-

THE TIGRIS AT MOSUL.

pied with gardens. It contains about 30,000 inhabitants, though its prosperity and population have greatly decayed. It is believed to occupy the site of the ancient town of Constantia. The river at this place is about 250 yards wide during the spring floods; but is not navigable, except for rafts of timber. Hence it flows on at a much lower level,

first to the east, and then again to the south-east, receiving some important tributaries, for about 200 miles, to the point where now stands the town of Mosul, and where formerly stood the august and mighty city of Nineveh.

It has been well observed that Nineveh was in ruins almost before profane history commenced. Its origin is carried up to a remote antiquity; for it seems to have been founded by Nimrod, the "mighty hunter," after he had built Babel. If we adopt the marginal rendering of a passage in the Book of Genesis, we find that, from some cause or other, Nimrod, having laid the beginning of his kingdom at Babel in the land of Shinar, and founded other cities there, went forth out of that land into Assyria, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Calah, and Resen, a great city, between Nineveh and Calah.

Thus rose simultaneously on the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates, in close proximity to each other, two cities, each of which was destined to attain surpassing power, extent, magnificence, and grandeur; to be in turn the metropolis of a mighty empire; to pass through a course of pride, idolatry, luxury, cruelty and sensuality; to become a signal oppressor of God's sinning people, and to fall under the predicted vengeance of Jehovah into utter and awful ruin.

About twenty-two centuries before Christ, a little more than a hundred and twenty years after the overwhelming deluge, the great Assyrian monarchy was

thus begun in the plains of Mesopotamia. For many hundred years we have no further knowledge of its history, unless Chedorlaomer, the king of Elam, or either of his allies, who made war upon the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, and were pursued and defeated by Abram, may have reigned over it; or Chushan-rishathaim, that king of Mesopotamia into whose hands, in the days of the judges, Jehovah delivered His people Israel for their disobedience, and who was at length conquered by Othniel, the valiant nephew of Caleb.

The empire appears to have been greatly extended, and its metropolis enlarged and beautified, by Ninus, and by his successor, the heroic Queen Semiramis; but the eras and the actions of these sovereigns, as recorded by the Greek writers of an age long subsequent, are involved in obscurity and fable, from which nothing can extricate them but the original records themselves, sculptured on Assyrian palace-walls, and now in process of being recovered and read, after having been buried for three thousand years.*

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* Since the appearance of the first edition of this volume, light has been gradually breaking on the history of the ancient Asiatic monarchies; but much is still fragmentary, much doubtful.

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Jonah III., IV.

AFTER the notice of its origin in the Book of Genesis, Nineveh is first brought before us in the Scriptures in the interesting mission of Jonah the prophet, about 860 B.C. The wickedness of the mighty city had gone up to God, who gave to His servant the perilous commission to go thither and announce its destruction. The failure of the prophet's faith, his disobedience, his endeavour to flee from the presence of Jehovah, his voyage towards Tarshish, the dreadful tempest that arose, his being cast into the sea, his entombment in the belly of the great fish, his miraculous preservation there, his repentance and confession, and his deliverance and restoration to dry land,—these are incidents replete with instruction and interest, but which we may dismiss with a mere enumeration.

Jehovah, who is ever gracious, and who chastens only for the profit of His people, having brought His erring servant back to the spirit of obedience, renews His commission: "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." He no longer refuses to take up the cross of a service so unwelcome to flesh, but at once sets out on his errand, not knowing but that his faithfulness may bring upon him the vengeance of the wicked city; he goes without demur to "pay his vows"; and we will follow him thither, and witness the delivery of the solemn message.

Clad in the rough garment of coarse camel's hair, which the prophets of Israel were wont to wear, pouring contempt on the pride and luxury around them; and supporting himself on his weary journey by an oaken staff; with a scrip of parched corn and a few dates suspended in his leathern girdle, he at length arrives on the banks of the rushing Hiddekel. For miles and miles before the long walls and multitude of towers that environed the vast city had appeared, stretching in a wide line along the distant horizon, the confused hum of many sounds, that continually grew louder and more distinct, the crowds of travellers, peasants, and slaves, the long lines of waggons and weary beasts, oxen, camels, and asses bearing merchandise, the gaily-caparisoned prancing horses, the cracking of whips, and the rattling of wheels of the jumping chariots, all jostling one another as they passed to and fro over the many high-roads that like a huge network intersect the broad plain, with a hundred other signs, had given sure token of approach to a great metropolis.

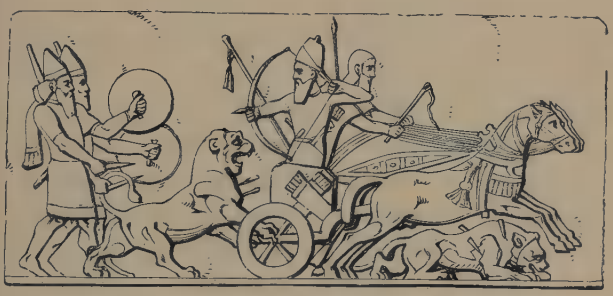
Now the lofty battlements rise upon the eye, stretching away on either hand without interruption, until they fade into the line where the distant horizon melts into the hazy sky; nor do they then cease, but run on far, far beyond the range of sight. Twenty miles in length the massive walls extend, and ten in breadth; thus being sixty miles in circumference,—"an exceeding great city of three days' journey,"—and covering an area of 200 square miles, along the

east bank of the river, besides an extensive and populous suburb on the opposite bank, and the long ranges of human habitations that stretch away into the plain from every gate. The wall is an immense structure, a hundred and fifty feet in height, and fifty in thickness,—so broad that three chariots can be driven along it abreast. It is constructed of bricks dried in the sun; but for one-third of the height, these are incased with blocks of polished stone. On the summit, at regular distances, are built towers, to the number of 1,500, each 200 feet high; and besides these, watch-towers here and there, of a pyramidal form, rise to a still loftier elevation, commanding a wide horizon.

The Israelitish seer gazes in mute astonishment at the wondrous scene before him; for the whole surface of the wall, except the polished plinth of stone, is covered with gigantic figures, painted in vivid colours upon the smooth plaster. There are "men portrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion, girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to."* There are the exploits of the ancient Assyrian kings depicted in life-like vigour; there the ancient hunter himself fights with the rampant lion, and buries the steel in his savage heart. There too he leads his mailed and helmeted warriors against his foes, or pursues them

* Ezek. xxiii. 14, 15.

with clouds of arrows from his sumptuous chariot. There his armies are gathered before the battlements of some hostile city, against which they plant their scaling ladders, while they deal heavy blows upon the walls, or pick out the massive stones, with their military engines. There scenes meet the eye, where the long line of bound and insulted captives led away, the torture and massacre, prisoners beheaded, impaled, or flayed, heaps of heads and amputated hands, tell how cruel is the victory.



LION HUNTING.

The admiration of the Hebrew stranger gives place to sorrow as he gazes upon the vivid pictures; where scene after scene only brings into prominence some of the rampant evils of man's unregenerate heart,—pride, luxury, covetousness, violence and cruelty; and all paraded as so many excellences, for the glorification of man. But he sees other things than these,—objects that no true Israelite can look upon without horror and indignation: he sees the sense-

less idols, the likeness of beast and bird and creeping thing, and other hideous forms, set on high, receiving the homage of incense-bearing priests and royal worshippers. He will look no more: but with stimulated zeal and freshened courage he girds himself to his arduous work.

But what shall the feeble voice of a poor unknown stranger do here? Look at yonder broad gateway, where the lofty portals expand half-way up the wall, and where the colossal winged lions of yellow marble shine in the beams of the morning sun with a golden glow. See how the living tide of men comes pouring out, each intent on his own purpose, with no leisure to think of his neighbour! The begrimed artisan hurries along beside the well-dressed merchant, and jostles the pompous scribe, who gathers his garment around him as if polluted. The light-hearted maiden, with her water-pitcher on her head, erect as an obelisk, trips past the sunken-eyed widow, wasted with sickness and poverty, who with a wailing babe at her back creeps out to seek a pittance in the corners of the fields. Nobles in scarlet and gold, priests in their long embroidered robes, ride out to enjoy the country air. Here a hunting party gallops forth, armed with bow and spear, followed by eager dogs well trained to find the panther in his lair, or to chase the antelope; their loud and merry laughter promises no sympathy with a sentence of woe. Here a proud and steel-clad warrior dashes by in his carved and inlaid chariot, the scales of his polished mail

flinging sparkles of light upon the surrounding throng; the gorgeous caparisons of his high-mettled steeds, that prance and arch their necks and champ their bits, attract the admiration of the crowd, whom he drives to either side, as he cleaves his swift course through them:—he plays carelessly with his ruby-

ASSYRIAN HORSES.

hilted dagger, but bestows not a glance on the messenger of Jehovah.

How shall the voice of the prophet be heard amidst this tumultuous din? The rattling of the chariot wheels over the brick pavement, the neighing of the horses, the clashing of arms, and the blowing of horns and trumpets; the noise of dogs and other domestic

animals; the cries of those who with hoarse lungs vaunt the excellences of their varied wares; the hum of thousands of human voices; the many sounds that come from shops and offices, the clang of the armourer's forge, the noise of the smith's anvil, of the carpenter's hammer and saw,—unite into a confused medley of noises, almost deafening.

To one who looked only at human probabilities nothing could be more discouraging than the attempt to deliver such a message in such a place; but Jonah remembers who hath sent him thither, and that his business is not with consequences, but with the will of Jehovah. Strengthened, therefore, the prophet enters into the guilty city and lifts up his voice like a trumpet. He commences his solemn message with these startling words: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" A crowd gathers around him, but none molest him, for a preternatural awe falls upon them as they listen to his denunciations of their speedy doom. Through their crowded and glittering streets he wends his way, continually pouring forth his words of terror, and denouncing the woe of the bloody city. He "drops the burden" of Jehovah upon their aggravated wickedness, bringing forth their crimes is all their hideous nakedness into the light, and pronouncing the righteous judgment of God, and His wrath revealed from heaven against them. The pride and haughtiness that said, "I am, and there is none beside me;" the carelessness that

regarded not the solemn retribution to come; the multiform idolatry that has robbed Jehovah of His rightful claim to homage and obedience; the deceitfulness and lying, the cheating and robbery that have filled the city, and the tyranny and oppression, the cruelty and bloodshed that have ground in pieces the nations, and filled the earth with mourning without pity or remorse; the prophet recounts in unsparing words: while every heart responds, and none dares deny that the accusations are true. In vain they listen for some offers of mercy; nothing but judgment falls on their ears; for the message which the seer has received to deliver is only a message of woe.

Word is brought to the King of Assyria, as he reclines at ease in his luxurious banquet hall, that the days of his proud city are numbered, and that her doom is at hand. Conviction strikes through his heart; for conscience, long silenced, now loudly speaks, and tells him that it is a righteous doom. Traditions and reports he has from time to time heard of the power and truth of Jehovah, and of His irresistible vengeance; but he has heard too that Israel's God is merciful; and though no call to repentance nor offer of pardon is mingled with the prophetic burden, yet the respite of forty days seems to imply that the way is not closed against penitence, and that the doom is not yet irreversible. Without a moment's delay, therefore, he arises from his throne, puts off his sumptuous garments of state, and covers himself

with sackcloth; and at the same time sends his servants into every part of the city to proclaim a solemn fast, while he retires into the recess of his chamber, to humble himself in dust and ashes, and to pray for mercy.

The sun at length declines; and Jonah prepares to seek the rest of night for his weary feet, which have borne him all the day through the interminable streets, though but a small part of the city has been traversed. But before he emerges from the gate, still pouring his heart-withering woe, he is met by the royal heralds, who thus proclaim the decree of the king and his nobles: "Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God. Yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?"

In this is manifested the faith that honours God. Deep humiliation, confession of guilt, fervent prayer, repentance, and turning away from all known evil, are appointed ways in which those against whom the denunciations of God's word lie may flee from the wrath to come. But if there was present pardon, and an averting of denounced judgment for guilty Nineveh, on their imperfect and probably partial and transient penitence, how much more may poor repentant sinners now come and cast themselves upon

the mercy of God, since free forgiveness is now offered, and the blood of Christ has been shed for sin! And will not the faith and conduct of the Ninevites, who repented at the preaching of Jonah, unsupported by any miraculous signs, rise up in the judgment to condemn the apathy and unbelief of the people of this country, unto whom the gospel has come, who have often heard of the love of God in Christ, but have never been obedient to the message of His grace?

But how is the prophet affected by what he hears? Does he not hail with joy the success of his preaching, and does not his gladness find vent in grateful praise to Jehovah, and kindly encouragement to the mourning citizens? Alas! no! he retires from the city moody and disappointed; and when the Holy Spirit tells him that the repentance of Nineveh has come up before Him, and that mercy shall rejoice against judgment, the servant of God captiously murmurs at the grace, and insinuates that it is a wrong to himself. He even ventures to request, in the petulance of his anger, that God will take his life from him, affirming that he had rather die than live any longer. Pride rises up in his heart, and suggests, that now his credit as a prophet will be gone, since his predictions are not fulfilled; pharisaic vindictiveness, that would rather see judgment executed against sin, than mercy exerted in pardon; national antipathy, that had expected to be gratified in the overthrow of a great Gentile empire, the mightiest in the earth.

Jonah has forgotten how mercifully the Lord has forgiven *him;* how He delivered him "from the belly of hell," whither his rebellion and folly had brought him. Ah! would that Christians had less of the peevish intolerant spirit of Jonah, and more of the loving, forbearing, forgiving spirit of Jesus!

Evening is gradually drawing her veil over the broad plain of Assyria, as the still rebellious prophet reclines his tired frame at the foot of a palm, a mile or two out of the city. More than one Ninevite has offered him hospitality, desirous to show respect to the messenger of Jehovah, and to profit by his instructions how to avert the threatened wrath; but the proffered courtesy has been rejected in sullen anger. He will have no fellowship with the guilty race, nor will he accept their friendship. The heaven shall be his canopy, and the earth his pillow. Yet truly to sleep beneath such a sky, reclined upon such a carpet, is no great self-denial.

The sun has gone down behind the long wall of the city, which just hides the horizon from view, but does not conceal the flush of ruddy light that bathes the western sky, nor the fantastic piles and little peaks of cloud, where the orb has disappeared, the points and sides of which display an edging of light that glows like molten gold. Streaks of crimson light radiate from the point of sun-setting, and stretching over the whole zenith in widening bands, rest upon the snowy peaks of Ararat, far in the north-east, flushing them with the hue of the rose. The parch-

ing heat has gone down with the sun, and a pleasant breeze, most delightfully cool, bears the fragrance of a thousand flowers. These, of every hue, enamelling the grass in gorgeous abundance, are now, indeed, beginning to fade from the view in the advancing shadow, but give out their perfume in more copious gushes, under the stimulus of the falling dew. The peasants have unyoked their cattle, and are trudging to their cottages through the fields; and lowing kine and bleating flocks are slowly returning from the pastures with distended udders. Women are seen around the huts, crouching beneath the kine to milk them as they arrive; others, in laughing groups, are going to the wells or to the river, bearing pitchers on their erect heads. Youths bring home baskets of fruit from the orchards, or huge bundles of grass and rushes which they have cut by the river's side, their feet and legs wet with the heavy dew, and loaded with the yellow pollen of the blossoming grass. Parties of the citizens, not yet aware of the proclamation, are enjoying the cool of the day; and many a traveller hurries along towards the city, anxious lest the gates should be shut before he can arrive. The youths and maidens are dancing together in many a happy group, to the music of their own voices, or of a lyre strung by coarse but not unskilful hands. Now and then the tinkling of a camel's bell betokens a party of wandering Arabs, whose long spears, tipped with tufts of ostrich-plumes, wave and flutter against the sky, above their heads. The long howl of the

jackal comes from the desert, and is answered by the dogs prowling beneath the city-walls for the carrion which daily accumulates there. At length, all the sights are lost in the purple night, save the stars that glitter and burn above; and all sounds have died away, except the rich notes of the bulbul, that are poured forth in gushes of melody from the orchards around. Lovely and soothing is the scene! but no charms of nature can calm the human spirit when a prey to evil passions. Turbulent and peevish anger, discontent with God, with himself, and with all around, are raging in Jonah, almost uncontrolled, until at length he sinks into feverish and unrefreshing slumber. His gracious Lord, however, "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," guards His failing servant with watchful love; for "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep!"

Morning breaks, and reveals the bold and broken ranges of Armenia's mountains, whose pointed summits stand out in dark relief against the vermilion east, and throw long lines of shadows across the sky. Up springs the glowing sun, and pours his scorching rays across the plain, flushing the face of the awakened prophet, as if the door of a furnace had been suddenly opened. The songs of thousands of happy birds ascend up to heaven; their tribute of praise to Him who watcheth with tender care the sparrow's fall, and heareth the young ravens which cry unto Him. The flowers, refreshed with dew, open their delicate blossoms, and the wide

landscape rejoices in the beams of the new-born day.

The city is still quiet, but it is not the quietness of repose; for in this sultry clime the population too well appreciate the refreshing coolness of early morning to be in bed after day has broken; and long before the sun had peeped over the mountains the gates at any other time would have been thrown open, and swarms of busy people would have been crowding to and fro. But now scarcely a human form is visible; and a silence, deep and solemn, reigns, where usually the hum of active life is heard, except that mournful lowings of cattle, heard at intervals through the night, still come from the teeming city, where they have been joining their distressed cries to the prayers of the penitent people, and thus have, as it were, unconsciously helped to keep the fast and vigil.

Still sullen and displeased, the Hebrew prophet no more seeks the city, but prepares himself a rude hut, or booth, of such materials as he can collect on the spot. A few sticks set in the ground, and others placed across them, to afford a frail support for the brittle stems of dried herbage, or the coarse grass that he can pull up with his hands, afford a slight protection from the rays of the sun, which every moment increases in torrid heat. Here he seats himself, determined to wait and see, notwithstanding the intimation he has received, that God has accepted its timely repentance, what will become of the city.

Such moroseness is as ill-judged as it is contrary to mercy and love: for surely no more certain way could be devised to prejudice the idolatrous heathen against the character and worship of the God whom the prophet represented.

But the same grace which forbears with the guilty Nineveh, forbears also with the rebellious Jonah. The Lord will reprove him, but in so gentle and convincing a manner, as shall instruct and humble, without crushing his spirit. For this purpose, He first miraculously causes to spring up behind the frail booth a luxuriant "gourd," or rather, a plant known to modern science as the castor-oil tree, of herbaceous structure, but with the dimensions of a small tree. Its abundant, broad, and elegantly divided leaves of a pleasant greenness, greatly refresh the languid prophet, not only by affording a better shadow from the burning sun than his poor booth could afford him, but by the coolness which in hot climates is always found beneath the foliage of trees, especially those with large leaves, produced by the copious evaporation from their extended surfaces. The plant, springing up in its rich luxuriance, casts its shadow over Jonah's head, to his great comfort and refreshment. Thus he, who is offended and angry at the preservation of a populous city from destruction, is made "exceeding glad" of the slight personal relief afforded by a sheltering shrub!

But scarcely is his excessive joy indulged, when it gives place to equally disproportionate grief. He

who spread the grateful shade over His servant's head, prepares a worm at the root, so that the tall and comely plant withers as rapidly as it rose. Its thick and succulent stem droops and falls, and the luxuriant foliage is all shrivelled and dry; while at the same time a vehement east wind, hot and parching, increases the intense heat of the sun that beats down in unmitigated fury: the air is like that of an oven

JONAH'S GOURD.

and the poor fainting prophet, having lost his friendly tree, gives himself up to despair, and again wishes that he may die!

"And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. Then said Jehovah, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast

not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

An humbling example is this of the depravity yet remaining in the heart of a renewed man, and ever ready to break out into some open sin, if watchfulness and faith be intermitted. Are we astonished that a messenger of God should repine at his own success; should desire the destruction rather than the salvation of sinners; should proudly justify his former disobedience, for which he had been already severely chastised, and his present anger, even before God Himself; and should impatiently pray for death, when he had been but just delivered from it in answer to prayer? Let the saint look into the depths of his own heart, and he will find his astonishment at Jonah's inconsistency much diminished. The remains of inbred corruption are sufficient in every child of God to betray him into that which will bring dishonour on the name of his Lord, and darkness and bitterness into his own soul, but for the constant exercise of faith in the atoning Blood, and the untiring care of his heavenly Advocate before the Throne. Self, the rival of Christ in the heart, is in one form or other the root of every sin. Self-seeking, self-pleasing, self-love, self-indulgence, self-glory, hide Christ from the soul, obscure the spiritual judg-

ment, deaden the conscience, and facilitate the commission of sins, at which the man of God, when walking in communion with his heavenly Father, would have shuddered. Nor is any occasion so small but that it may be successfully used by Satan as a vehicle of temptation. Jonah selfishly valued the refreshment of his "gourd" more than the lives of sixscore thousand innocent babes; more than the pardon of half-a-million of sinners! What need have we to guard against the power of impetuous passions, and to watch and pray, with humble self-distrust, against the treachery of our corrupt hearts, lest we mistake the dictates of a spiteful temper for a zeal for the Lord's glory! True charity "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth," even when found in an adversary; and so far from repining at marks of Divine favour being bestowed on those who perhaps differ much from ourselves, will be able to recognise the sovereignty of God, and give Him thanks for His mercy.

It is well for us that in our constant failure we have to do with "a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and of great kindness," who does not "deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities." The forbearance and tenderness manifested in Jehovah's expostulations with His fretful servant, show us His compassionate character, and express a love that cannot wear out. The Lord deals in various modes with His people to conform them to Himself, and humble their hearts; sometimes

inflicting fearful chastisement, as when He caused His servant to be engulphed in the yawning fish; at others, condescending to expostulate, and gently to reprove. But neither the one nor the other is the result of waywardness or variableness, but of infinite love and infinite wisdom working under different circumstances by different means, each, however, being the very best adapted to promote the desired end.

Ezekiel XXXI. Nahum I.—III.

THE repentance and reformation of the people of Nineveh under the preaching of Jonah, prolonged the existence of the great Assyrian empire for about seventy years. Near the middle of this period, Pul, the first of its monarchs whose name is recorded in Scripture, invaded the kingdom of Israel, and made it tributary. About the year B.C. 746, according to Greek authority, in the reign of the luxurious and effeminate Sardanapalus, an insurrection was raised by Arbaces, the governor of Media; and the example of the Medes was followed by the Babylonians, excited by a Chaldean priest, named Belesys. The Persians and other allies soon joined the revolters, who attacked the capital on all sides. It maintained a siege for three years; at the end of which time the monarch, collecting his precious treasures into a vast funeral pyre, placed himself on it, surrounded by his wives and concubines, and set it on fire. All perished in the flames; and thus ended the long dynasty of

the mighty monarchs of Upper Assyria. The empire was now divided into three kingdoms, Assyria, Babylon, and Media. Arbaces, commonly supposed to be the king named in Scripture Tiglath-pileser, established a new dynasty in the Assyrian metropolis; came against the kingdoms of Syria and Israel, carrying away into captivity some of the people of both nations; and, during a reign of nearly twenty years, proved himself an energetic, powerful, and successful monarch.

About twenty-five years after this first captivity of Israel, Hoshea endeavoured, by an alliance with Egypt, to throw off the Assyrian yoke; on which Shalmaneser, the successor of Tiglath-pileser II., brought his armies, and invested Samaria, which fell into his hands after having sustained the tedious horrors of a siege for three years. The Assyrian monarch, or perhaps his successor, Sargon, according to a policy which was frequently adopted in ancient times, determined to remove the whole population of the conquered country, and to replace it by colonies from other parts of his dominions. He accordingly "carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." By this we understand the principal persons, and the bulk of the common people; but from Ezra iv. 2, we learn that the work was not completed until the reign of Esar-haddon.

The campaign of Sennacherib against the kingdom of Judah; his haughty arrogance and blasphemies

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against Jehovah; the distress and piety of King Hezekiah; and the miraculous destruction of the invading army, by which a hundred and eighty-five thousand men became in one night "all dead corpses;" have made the name of this Assyrian king prominent in the sacred Scriptures. Humiliated at his defeat, he returned to Nineveh, where he was slain by two of his own sons, and another son, Esar-haddon, reigned in his stead.

In the confusion which followed the loss of the army and the murder of the monarch, the Medes and the Babylonians succeeded in recovering their independence; and the king of the latter sent a congratulatory embassy to Hezekiah. But Esar-haddon, having at length subdued his revolted provinces, found himself sufficiently strong to push his conquests westward. As we have already intimated, he completed the removal of the Israelitish people to Assyria; after which, apparently in the same year, he sent his generals into the neighbouring territory of Judah, where his father had been so wofully discomfited. But he who now reigned on the throne of David was the wicked Manasseh, a degenerate son of a worthy sire, who had "seduced his people to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel;" who had dealt with familiar spirits and wizards; who had caused his children to pass through the fire to Moloch; and who had "shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another." No mira-

culous interposition was wrought for him; no angel of death now smote the Assyrian host. Manasseh was taken "among the thorns," having attempted to hide himself in a thicket, and being brought in fetters to Esar-haddon, was by him carried captive to Babylon, which, it seems, was the seat of this monarch's residence. The captive Jewish king was here brought to humble himself before God, and to confess and bewail his enormous sins, and became one of the most signal examples of pardoning grace that have ever been recorded. As in the case of Saul of Tarsus, the Lord seems to have intended to show forth in Manasseh an example of "all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should thereafter believe on Him."

It was principally in the reign of Esar-haddon that the pious Tobit lived long and prosperously at Nineveh; an Israelite, who had been carried away with his family, from the northern part of Galilee, by Shalmaneser.

It seems also to have been in the early part of the same reign, that the magnificent poem, entitled "The Burden of Nineveh," was composed by the inspired prophet Nahum. On its style and structure Bishop Lowth makes the following observations: "None of the minor prophets seem to equal Nahum in boldness, ardour, and sublimity. His prophecy, too, forms a regular and perfect poem; the exordium is not merely magnificent, it is truly majestic; the preparation for the destruction of Nineveh, and the

description of its downfall and desolation, are expressed in the most vivid colours, and are bold and luminous in the highest degree."* He is called the El-Koshite, from the village of El-Kosha in Galilee, according to Jerome; but there is a village named Elkosh, about fifteen miles to the north of the ruins of Nineveh, where a very general tradition places the tomb of the prophet. It is a Christian village; but it is held in reverence by both Mohammedans and Jews, who resort thither in great numbers, and keep the tomb in repair. Mr. Layard, in his most interesting work on Nineveh,† considers the tradition as not without weight. If it is entitled to confidence, Nahum must have delivered his burden, like Jonah, his predecessor, with the proud city herself before him.

The prophet, in language of terrible vividness, denounces "Woe to the bloody city;" he accuses her of being "all full of lies and robbery;" as being constantly filled with prey, which, like "an old lion tearing in pieces his victims for his whelps, and strangling them for his lionesses, and filling his holes with prey and his dens with ravin," — the tyrannical might of the Assyrian monarchy had gathered from the spoiled nations. He accuses her of abominable idolatry, under the similitude of "a well-favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families

* Lowth's Prelect. xxi.

† "Nineveh and its Remains." London, 1849.

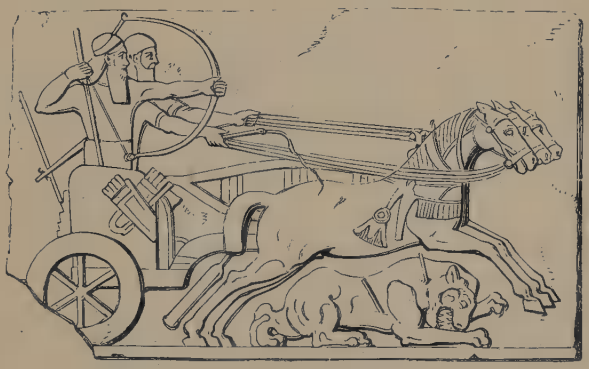
through her witchcrafts." Heavy threatenings from Jehovah are uttered, who repeatedly declares that He is "against her;" again and again is it announced that the fire shall devour her, that her chariots shall be burned in the smoke; that the sword shall devour her "young lions;" that, though she should make great preparations to stand a siege, drawing waters, fortifying the strong-holds, and making strong the brick-kilns,* yet should she be devoured; that her crowned captains should flee away like grasshoppers, and their place be no more known. For Jehovah will bring against her a terrible enemy, who, for his power and violence, and unsparing mercilessness, is known as "the dasher in pieces," who shall bring his mighty men in scarlet, with blood-red shields, as if to denote their sanguinary purposes; whose chariots, furnished with flaming torches, shall rage in her streets, and jostle one against another in the broad ways; who shall take the spoil of silver, and the spoil of gold, and the pleasant and glorious furniture, of which "there is no end." In her streets shall be heard "the noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots." Then it is added, as if the tumultuous scene were really being enacted before the prophet's eye; "the horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of

* That is, for the making of bricks, in order to form new fortifications.

slain, and a great number of carcases; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses." The noble river, her pride and boast, shall help her destruction; for "the gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palaces shall be dissolved." Jehovah will make an utter end; affliction shall not rise up the second time. No more of her name shall be sown; the Lord will cut off the graven image, and the molten image; *He will make her grave*, because she is vile. He will even cast upon her abominable filth, and make her vile, and set her as a gazing-stock.

No city in the world seemed less likely to be subject to such a doom than the great and populous Nineveh, the metropolis of the mighty Assyrian empire. Yet before a hundred years had expired, all was accomplished; and not a jot nor a tittle of God's word against her had failed. The Medes under Cyaxares, and the Babylonians under Nabopolassar, again united their forces; and, after a siege, during which it is said *the sudden rise of the Tigris overthrew* a part of the walls, they succeeded in taking it; when, to gratify the envy of the Medes, it was utterly destroyed. In Jeremiah's time it had utterly passed away; for that prophet, enumerating the kingdoms of the earth who were doomed to drink at God's hand "the cup of fury," makes no mention of Assyria, or of Nineveh; and Ezekiel, who prophesied at the same time, gives a highly poetical description of "the Assyrian," but holds up his awful fall as a warning to other nations.

The destruction of Nineveh was absolute and sudden; "affliction" did not, as in the case of Babylon, "*rise up a second time.*" Lucian, a writer in the second century of the Christian era, himself a native of a city on the Euphrates, declares that Nineveh had *utterly perished*, that there was then no vestige of it remaining, and that none knew where it had stood. Tradition had, however, indistinctly



CHARIOT OF NINEVEH.

preserved a remembrance of the site; and immense heaps of earth, scattered along the banks of the Tigris, principally on the east side opposite the modern city of Mosul, were considered as, *with some probability*, indicating the place where once had stood the proud seat of Assyrian greatness.

Within the last few years, discoveries, the most startling, and of the highest interest, have been

made ; and these mounds have been found to contain remains of Assyrian art, of very high antiquity, of great beauty, often in a perfect state of preservation, by means of which our knowledge of the history of this ancient empire is already receiving important accessions. While we write these pages, reports of fresh discoveries, as unexpected as interesting, are almost daily arriving ; the pavement of one of the city gates has been uncovered, deeply indented with the ruts of the chariot wheels ; and even the throne of the Assyrian kings has been found, built of carved ivory, with lions' feet, with the remains of a sort of veil or curtain around it, which appears to have screened the sacred person of the sovereign from a too familiar gaze.

The principal mounds which appear to be identified with ancient Nineveh, are Kouyunjik (including the so-called tomb of Jonah), on the east bank of the Tigris, opposite Mosul ; Nimroud, about eighteen miles lower down the river, near the junction of the Greater Zab ; Karasules, about twelve miles north of Nimroud, and Khorsabad, nearly the same distance north of Kouyunjik. These points form the four corners of a rhomboid, the circumference of which is sixty miles, the dimensions assigned to the ancient city. Many mounds are scattered over this area, and the whole face of the country is strewn with bricks, pottery, and other fragments of antiquity. Forty miles below Nimroud, on the west bank of the Tigris, is another vast shapeless mass of ruins, covered with

grass, and called Kalah Sherghat. This is another Assyrian city, possibly the Calah mentioned in Genesis x. 11, as having been built by Nimrod. Other mounds are also scattered about the great plain through which the Tigris and its tributaries flow.

The first monuments of importance were obtained at Khorsabad, in the year 1844, by M. Botta, the French consul at Mosul. Excavating in the mound so called, he uncovered a chamber, surrounded by slabs of alabaster, on which were sculptured, in relief, battles, sieges, processions, and other scenes; with numerous inscriptions in the arrow-headed character. It was evident that the palace, of which this was a part, had been subjected to the action of fire; for the slabs were completely calcined, and could scarcely be preserved sufficiently to allow the scenes and inscriptions to be copied, before they mouldered into dust.

In the autumn of the following year, our enterprising countryman, Mr. Layard, commenced excavations at Nimroud, and in a few days discovered many relics, among which were a pair of gigantic winged bulls, but in an imperfect condition. Many bas-reliefs of scenes similar to those already described, were subsequently discovered, many of them still bearing traces of paint, with which they had been either entirely or partially adorned. The exposure of the majestic countenance of a human-headed lion, and its extrication from the "grave of filth" in which it had lain for five-and-twenty centuries, are

described by the discoverer in the most graphic manner; as are also the details of many other most important resuscitations, into which space forbids our entering. Among the most interesting objects obtained, besides the numerous sculptured scenes of military, civil, and religious incidents, were helmets of iron and copper, many scales which once composed the iron coats-of-mail of the warriors, vases of great elegance, of alabaster and clay, and one of glass, crouching sphinxes, lions of basalt and of copper, an obelisk of black marble elaborately sculptured, ivory ornaments and implements of various sorts, and, recently, vessels of copper, which, when the outer coat of oxide is scraped off, appear as bright as if they had just left the shop of the workman.*

In all these discoveries is brought out the unerring truth of the Word of God. The descriptions given of Nineveh's greatness and power, of her riches and luxury, her idolatry, her cruelty, are illustrated in the most graphic manner by these silent but unimpeachable witnesses. The long oblivion in which they had lain; the "grave" in which they had been entombed, and from which they are now plucked to become "a gazing stock;" the evidences they exhibit of a sudden overthrow; the marks of fire

* Since the publication of the first edition of this volume, the resurrection of buried Nineveh has made great progress; and, in particular, by the skilled energy of the late Mr. George Smith, a vast treasure of written records has been obtained, which are rapidly being read.

which most of them display, no less exactly agree with the letter of inspired prophecy, the doom pronounced upon the beautiful but guilty city, by the living God: "And He will stretch out His hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness. And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations; both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds: for He shall uncover the cedar work. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly; that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! Every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand!"*

BELOW the confluence of the Greater Zab with the Tigris, the point which may be considered the southern limit of ancient Nineveh, the river runs through an immense plain, bounded on the south by the Hamrin Hills, through which it forces its way, after having received the waters of the Lesser Zab. At this point, which is about eighty miles below Mosul, the Tigris has a breadth of 500 yards. Below the confluence of this river, a range of hills on the western bank separates the Tigris from the channel

* Zeph. ii. 13–15.

of the Thathar, now dry, and extends to the termination of a long mound, known as the "Median wall." Here the river issues from the hills into the great central, or Babylonian plain, where it pursues its course nearly parallel to the Euphrates, and not far distant from it. The closest approximation of the two rivers, before their junction, is at the point where the city of Bagdad is situated, which is not more than twelve or fourteen miles from the Euphrates. The Saklawiyeh* canal, which unites the two rivers near this point, is indeed forty-five miles long, but it pursues a somewhat tortuous course from a point on the Euphrates considerably higher up than that where it enters the Tigris. Twenty miles below the termination of this canal, the Diyalah, a large river, pours a great body of water into the Tigris from the north-east; it is 400 yards broad, and the strong current is described as rushing as from a sluice. An ancient canal connects these two rivers near Bagdad, and several others may still be traced crossing the plain between the Tigris and the Euphrates; at once uniting their waters, and affording facilities for commercial navigation, as well as a supply of water for agricultural purposes to these fertile regions. About 350 miles below Bagdad, the Tigris, after a very winding course, unites with the Euphrates to form the Shat el Arab, as already described. The plain

* This name may probably be a corruption of Seleucia (Σελεύκεια), of which we shall presently speak.

watered by these rivers contains, except in the dry season, good pasturage, and is occupied by several wandering tribes of Bedouins, who pitch their tents where they please. The physical characteristics of the Tigris, though varying considerably in the different parts of its course, agree with those which mark the correspondent portions of the Euphrates.

These ancient rivers have witnessed the rise and fall of several *generations* (if we may be allowed the expression) of mighty cities. Babylon and Nineveh pursued their rival courses together through a long series of ages; then they were involved in ruin; but the former survived her sister city for three hundred years. Then Seleucus Nicator built a magnificent city on the west bank of the Tigris, about forty miles to the north of Babylon, from whose ruins he took the materials of which it was erected, and the inhabitants with which it was peopled. It was called Seleucia, after the name of its founder, but is frequently mentioned in history by the appellation of New Babylon. Its form was that of an eagle, with expanded wings, and it contained in Pliny's time 600,000 inhabitants. It was burned by Trajan, and again by Lucius Verus; it was also taken by Severus, after which it was almost entirely abandoned. Julian found it completely deserted.

A little below Seleucia, but on the opposite side of the river, was built another city, named Ctesiphon. It was the winter residence of the Parthian kings, who in summer preferred a more northern situation.

Like its opposite neighbour, it was sacked by the emperor Severus, in A.D. 198. It also was largely indebted for its materials to the ruins of Babylon. Some interesting remains of it exist to this day, of which the Tauk Kesra is the largest ancient arch of brickwork known, being a semicircle eighty-five feet wide, 106 feet high, and 150 feet long.

A new city rose out of the ashes of Ctesiphon, which for awhile bore the same name, but at length came to be designated by the appellation of Al Modain; the metropolis of the Persian kings. It was taken by assault, with immense spoil, by the Saracens, in 637; and, like its predecessors, sank under desertion and decay.

From the bricks which had served already to form four successive capitals, a fifth was destined to arise in its turn. In the year 763, Bagdad was founded by the Caliph Al Mansur, on the western bank, nearly on the site of the ancient Seleucia; but a suburb on the opposite bank was gradually formed, and advanced to a still greater condition of magnificence. It remained the flourishing metropolis of the Caliphs till 1259, when it was taken and sacked by the Tartars. A second time, in 1401, it suffered the same fate from the same foes, when a pyramid of ninety thousand human heads, erected on its ruins, displayed the dreadful vengeance of Tamerlane. Since that time it has suffered many calamities, one of the most terrible of which occurred about twenty years ago, when it was nearly depopulated by the

plague, and by an inundation of the Tigris. Thus, as if a sentence of ruin were attached to every fragment of ancient Babylon, Bagdad is swiftly verging to decay,—the fate of its predecessors.

"This is the work of the Lord God of hosts in the land of the Chaldeans. Come against her from the utmost border, open her storehouses: cast her up as heaps, and destroy her utterly: let nothing of her be left. . . . A sword is upon the Chaldeans, saith the Lord. . . . A sword is upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women: a sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed." *

Daniel x.

IT was upon the banks of this river ("the great river, which is Hiddekel"), though in what part of its course we are not informed, that the beloved Daniel was favoured with a vision of Jehovah in His glory, and had events of great importance revealed to him, stretching onwards from his own times to the latter days,—days even yet not arrived. Three years had elapsed since Cyrus had proclaimed liberty for the captive Jews to return from Babylon, but comparatively few had availed themselves of the permission;

* Jer. l. 25, 26, 35, 37.

the many had learned to regard the city of their captivity as their home, indifferent to the desolation of Jerusalem, and forgetful of the covenant of Jehovah. The faithful prophet, who must now have been not far from ninety years of age, had mourned over the carelessness of his brethren with solemn fasting and humiliation. For three whole weeks he had eaten no pleasant bread, nor had tasted flesh nor wine, nor allowed himself the comforts which his station and his infirmities usually required. As he sat on the bank of the river at the end of this time, perhaps engaged in confession of his people's sin, suddenly there appeared to him the glorious form of One, whom, from the description of His person, we recognise to have been the Son of God. As when long afterwards He manifested Himself to the beloved disciple, John, the Daniel of the Church, when in captivity, He was seen clothed in His priestly garment of fine linen, to express His office as the High Priest and Mediator of His people, and His unspotted righteousness. He was girt with a girdle of gold, denoting His infinite holiness, and His preciousness in the sight of His Father and also of His saints. His person had the radiant, transparent beauty of a precious stone, perhaps to intimate His perfect truth; His face as lightning, and His eyes as lamps of fire, might show His piercing omniscience, His instant detection of evil, and His terrible wrath to His enemies; while His arms and His feet of polished brass might express His illustrious power engaged to

defend His people, and to tread, as in a winepress, His enemies.

And what was the effect of this glorious vision upon Daniel? He was, even by the testimony of Heaven itself, "a man greatly beloved;" his character, as far as it is recorded in the Word, seems peculiarly upright and spotless; he was accustomed to communion with God; and from his youth had been familiar with heavenly visions. Yet no sooner does he see "the King in His beauty" than "there remains no strength in him; his comeliness is turned in him to corruption, and he retains no strength." And so it has always been: the revelation of the Lord in His glorious holiness must always humble and break down the strength of nature. Holy Job found it so. He had heard of God "by the hearing of the ear;" but when his eye saw Him, he cried out, "Behold I am vile: I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Isaiah found it so; he saw the Lord sitting upon His throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple; and the effect was to evoke the cry, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips!" Ezekiel found it so; for the vision of the glory of God, which he saw, threw him upon his face, as one that had no strength. And John found it so. He had walked with his Lord in sweet companionship through the years of His public ministry, and had been admitted to peculiar familiarity, even "leaning on His bosom;" he had seen the glory of Jesus when transfigured upon the Holy

Mount, when "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light;" he had looked upon His resurrection body, and had seen Him when, taken up from the earth, He had soared away upon the cloud into the brightness of the Father's presence. If any man could have beheld the unveiled glory of the risen Son of man, it would surely have been John; yet when he saw Him, *he fell at His feet as dead.*

So that blessed consummation, which every believer ought to be looking-for with earnest hope, the speedy return of Jesus for the Church, according to the closing promise of His word, "Behold! I come quickly," if it were to take place in our present condition of being, so far from filling us with unspeakable joy, would only be a ministration of dismay and terror. These "vile bodies" could not bear the effulgence of His person, "coming in His own glory, and in the glory of His Father, and in the glory of His holy angels;" and hence it is graciously ordained that at the very instant of His appearing, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality;" our vile body, changed and "fashioned like unto His glorious body," and made a fit companion for the glorified spirit, shall be able to gaze upon the full radiance of Jesus, and find the chief element of everlasting joy to consist in that beatific vision.

III.

THE RIVER CHEBAR.

THE CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL.

The Khabor—The Greater Zab—Koordistan—Lakes—The Flamingo—Mountains—The Koords—The Chaldeans—The Yezidis—Halah—Habor—Gozan—Hara—Adiabene—The Siege of Samaria—Sieges in the Assyrian Sculptures.

THE VISION OF THE GLORY OF GOD.

Ezekiel—The Shechinah—The Kingly Glory—The Cherubim—The Wheels—The Throne—The Departure of the Glory—The Rejection of Israel—The Return of the Throne—Universal Blessing.

1 Chron. v. 26. 2 Kings xvii. 6.

Among the rugged mountains of Chaldea, about a day's journey to the north of the spot where stand the northernmost ruins of ancient Nineveh, are the sources of the river Khabor. This stream pursues for the greater part of its length a north-west course, almost parallel with the line of the Tigris, but in the very opposite direction, and separated from it by a range of hills. At length it turns to the south-west, and after a course of about seventy miles, empties itself into the Tigris, a little below the town of Jezireh.

Through the same mountains, but having its rise considerably farther to the north, at an elevation of 7,000 feet above the sea, flows the Greater Zab. Its principal source is nearly midway between the Lakes of Van and Urumiyah; and after pursuing a winding course of more than 200 miles, parts of which are scarcely known to Europeans, and receiving several affluents, it pours a deep stream, sixty feet wide, into the Tigris, close to the southern boundary of the ancient city, which was built in the angle of the two rivers.

The mountains of Koordistan, through which flow the streams just described, are very elevated; and Mount Ararat, which may be considered as their

northern extremity, is the loftiest peak in Western Asia, its summit being 17,310 feet above the sea. Ridges branch off from this renowned mountain to the south and south-west, inclosing the wild and picturesque Lake Van, and then spread themselves on either hand, until the whole space between the plain of Urumiyah and the valley of the Tigris, a region about 180 miles in width, is occupied by rugged precipitous mountains, and deep romantic glens and valleys. Those ridges which surround Lake Van are very lofty, many of the peaks being white with perpetual snow. The mountain chain that runs along the western edge of this region is of scarcely less altitude; but between their snowy barrier and the Lake Urumiyah, there is a plain of great fertility, comprising an area of 500 square miles, covered with three hundred villages and hamlets. Many streams of clear cool water from the adjacent mountains run through the plain, and irrigate the numerous fields and gardens with which its bosom is covered; the former rich with waving crops or luxuriant verdure, the latter with flowers and fruits of many kinds. The landscape is described as one of the most lovely that can be imagined; the effect being heightened by the contrast of such exuberant fertility and beauty with the stern and rugged grandeur of the mountain-sides, that form the background of the picture; while, in the plain, the willows, poplars, and sycamores by the water-courses, and the groves of fruit-trees,—the peach, apple, pear, quince,

apricot, plum, and cherry,—together with the luxuriant vineyards, give to large sections the appearance of a rich and variegated forest.

Lake Urumiyah, along whose side this lovely and verdant plain is spread, is about eighty miles in

THE FLAMINGO.

length and thirty in width. Lake Van is nearly of the same size, but is somewhat triangular in form. The waters of these mountain lakes, though upwards of 5,000 feet above the sea-level, are very salt. That of Van is so impregnated with alkali, that the people

surrounding it employ it for making soap, but the salt from Urumiyah is sufficiently pure for culinary purposes. The water of the latter is so salt, that a man will sink in it no lower than his shoulders, and no fishes live in it. Lake Van, however, abounds in fish. Many species of aquatic birds frequent their shores, among which the beautiful flamingo is conspicuous, often occurring in flocks, which spread themselves along the shore for miles in length. This noble bird is marked by the great length of its legs and of its neck, and still more by its plumage, which is of the richest and most brilliant scarlet all over, except the quill feathers of the wings, which are deep black. As these fine birds are five or six feet high, when erect, and as they have the habit of ranging themselves in long lines at the water's edge, where they feed, they present, to a spectator at a distance, the appearance of a regiment of soldiers marshalled in order of battle, perfect in symmetry, uniformity, and brilliancy. Such a deceptive sight is often witnessed on the verdant shores of these elevated lakes.

The whole of the region above described is of the wildest character. Hoary peaks of many fantastic forms rear their snow-capped summits toward heaven, and many precipitous chasms, descending to a terrific depth, make the traveller tremble as he looks down them. The only road in many places winds along the face of an almost perpendicular rock, where a single false step would hurl the hapless victim to a dreadful death far below ; and often it diminishes to

a mere ledge, scarcely wide enough to allow the foot to be placed on it; or here and there disappears entirely, leaving gaps which can be passed only by leaping from ledge to ledge. The less elevated summits are frequently crowned with fortresses almost impregnable, from the difficulty of access; and sometimes these are placed on isolated rocks, with sides scarcely less abrupt than a wall.

The rocky cliffs are broken by many a yawning ravine, through each of which a torrent pours its foaming waters, frequently dividing into a hundred little streams, breaking into silvery cascades over the jutting points, and falling in clouds of spray into the dark glen beneath, along the bottom of which it struggles and winds, till it at length issues into the bosom of a wider valley, watered by a wider rivulet. Many of these streams flow through the mountains, half concealed by the blushing oleanders that bloom in rich abundance along their narrow banks. In these sheltered vales the mulberry, the fig, the olive, the pomegranate, and the walnut produce their plenteous fruit; and fields of maize and sesame are varied by plats of the cotton-shrub. Forests of oaks grow along the mountain-sides, the galls of which form no inconsiderable article of commerce. Flocks of sheep and goats are kept upon the hills, though the former frequently suffer from the depredations of the bears, which are numerous and formidable. Antelopes are sometimes seen in the valleys; and the ibex, with its huge knotted horns, congregates in

groups upon the ledges and points of rock, gazing in conscious security on the approaching stranger; but so wary are they, that long before he can come within range, they have bounded away to the inaccessible summits of the mountains, rousing the eagle from his lofty nest as they pass.

Two distinct races of men dwell in these mountain fastnesses. The first are the Koords, a warlike people, professing, though with some laxity, the religion of Islâm. They are doubtless descended from the primitive inhabitants of the country, and their name may be identified with that of the ancient Cordians, or Carducheans. Nominally their country is divided between Turkey and Persia, but practically they are almost independent, and some of the more powerful tribes are avowedly so. Some of them reside habitually in villages, but others lead a roving life, pasturing their cattle where they please, and residing in tents of black goat's hair. Like the Arabs, whom in habits they somewhat resemble, they live largely by plunder, robbing and murdering any whom they can overcome. They frequently engage in predatory excursions, assembling a numerous party of horsemen, well-mounted and equipped, and coming down upon a village in the dead of night. Thus they manage to take a large booty before the sleeping villagers are ready to defend themselves. If pursued by a stronger force, they have only to strike their tents, and flee to their impregnable strongholds in the mountains.

The other race is commonly known by the name

of Nestorians, but they themselves prefer the appellation of Chaldeans. They speak a distinct language, the ancient Syriac, and profess the Christian religion, which they received at a very early period, perhaps even in apostolic days. They cultivate fields and vineyards, but are principally a pastoral people, possessing large flocks of sheep and goats, in which their principal wealth consists. Dwelling in fixed habitations commonly constructed of stone, and associated in extensive villages with ancient churches, they yet perform a partial annual migration. A large number of the people retire to the higher pastures during the summer months, where they pitch their tents and tend their flocks, returning to their villages on the approach of winter, which in this climate is sufficiently severe. They manifest much primitive simplicity of manners, are moral, hospitable, industrious, and peaceable ; yet they possess the fearless independence of spirit, and willingness to stand in defence of their lives, liberty, and property, that are commonly found in mountaineers.

There is yet another people, who perhaps may be distinct from either of the above races, the Yezidis, who, from their fear of and respect for the evil spirit, are commonly known as Devil-worshippers. These people, who are not very numerous, speak a dialect of the Koordish language, but are by some supposed to be descended from the Manicheans, and to have a Hebrew origin.

The region whose physical characteristics and in-

habitants we have been describing is now called Koordistan, but it was anciently Assyria Proper. This term must not be confounded with the Assyrian *empire*, which was of far wider limits, embracing in its broadest dominion many surrounding countries. It is interesting as being the region into which the ten tribes of Israel were carried captive by Tiglath-pileser, Shalmaneser, and Esarhaddon, in whose reigns the Assyrian monarchy seems to have been confined to this region; the kingdoms of Media and of Babylonia still maintaining, though precariously, against the increasing power of the former, the independence which they had recently achieved.

The first of these monarchs is said to have carried away the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh (the tribes that dwelt to the east of the Jordan), "and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day." And the same localities with trifling variation are assigned to the remainder of the ten tribes, who were removed by Shalmaneser about nineteen years afterwards. He "took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and in Habor [by] the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes."

These names appear to have been very satisfactorily identified by Dr. Grant, the American missionary to the Nestorians. The name of Halah is probably the same with that of Calah of Genesis x. 11, one of the cities built by Nimrod in Assyria, apparently

near Nineveh. Early Syrian commentators say that Calah was the same as the modern Hatareh, which is about fourteen miles north of Mosul. It probably gave name to the district of Chalah, which, according to ancient geographers, extended from the Tigris to the Zab, which would thus include part of the region under consideration.

Habor, there seems to be scarcely a doubt, is the modern Khabor. There are two rivers of this name, one falling into the Euphrates, the other into the Tigris; they are not very far from each other, but the latter, from the names with which it is here associated, is doubtless the one intended.

Gozan is said to signify *pasture.* The Nestorians use the term (slightly altered to Zosan, by a change of letters not at all uncommon) for the highlands on which they pasture their numerous flocks in summer. The whole region through which the Khabor and the Zab flows is of this character; but, as being the larger stream, Dr. Grant supposes the latter to be emphatically "the river of Gozan" intended. The word *by* it will be perceived is in italics in our Bibles, which intimates that there is no word answering to it in the original, but that it has been supplied by the translators, to aid, as they supposed, the sense.

The word Hara occurs only in the passage in the Chronicles, but is not found in the Septuagint or Syriac renderings (both very ancient versions) of that text. Professor Robinson supposes it to have been an explanatory note appended in the margin by

a transcriber, as it signifies "a mountainous region," and is very appropriate; and that it gradually became incorporated with the text.

The cities, or *villages* (Syr. and Vulg.), or *mountains* (LXX.), of the Medes are probably those on the *borders* of Media, as that country was at this time independent of Assyria. It embraced, however, a part of the same mountain region.

The central portion of this elevated country was known in the time of the Greeks by the name of Adiabene, probably derived from that of Zab. And here some of the ten tribes were living in the time of Josephus; for Agrippa in his famous speech to the Jews speaks of their fellow tribes dwelling in Adiabene, and in the power of the Parthians.

Hither then it was, we may safely believe, that the inhabitants of Samaria, Galilee, and the region beyond Jordan, the ten tribes of Israel who had revolted from the house of David, were carried away captive. They had revolted from Jehovah also, and had greedily adopted a base idolatry, the worship of the golden calves at Bethel and at Dan. Many solemn warnings were sent to them; the burdens uttered by Amos, Joel, Hosea, and Micah, the preaching and miracles of Elijah and Elisha, and many premonitory judgments,—all failed to arrest their downward career of idolatry and iniquity: at length the wrath of Jehovah rose against them, and there was no remedy.

Samaria, the capital city, sustained the force of

the Assyrian army for three years. Whether the horrors that she underwent were equal to those which she had suffered on a former occasion, when besieged by the Syrians under Benhadad, is not recorded. Jehovah had now given her up, and written *Lo-ammi* upon her people; and her distresses were not worthy of being related in His word with minute particularity. The guilty city, however, was at length taken, and her king with his people "plucked up out of the land." Jehovah was very angry with Israel and *removed them out of His sight.*

AN ASSYRIAN SIEGE.

The monumental marbles of Nineveh, recently brought to light, give us many graphic representations of sieges and assaults of fortified cities by the Assyrian forces, and thus afford us important information as to how they were conducted. One of these, now in the British Museum, is of particular interest, as containing illustrations of most of the devices of attack and defence usually employed, as well as the carrying away of captives.

A city is represented, consisting of many towers, defended by pointed battlements, with a small river at its base. Against it the Assyrian army is engaged, led by the king in person, who is seen shooting at the garrison with an arrow, while his shield-bearer holds up his buckler in front, and two eunuchs behind carry his arms and his parasol. Near the king some warriors are seen, with crow-bars wrenching the stones out of the wall to open a breach. Scaling-ladders are set up against the wall, up which the soldiers climb, holding their shields above their heads, and seeking, by dislodging the defenders with their spears, to make good their footing on the battlements.

In another part of the wall we see the battering-ram, which has broken down many of the stones. It is armed by a thick, blunt mass of metal, not moulded into the form of an animal's head ; its blows seem to have been directed diagonally upwards. It is covered by a moveable house, in which are concealed the men and machinery by which it is moved ; the front part rises into a lofty tower, as high as the battlements of the city ; and here are placed two warriors, one of whom discharges his arrows at the garrison, while the other defends him by holding up a large shield. The ram-house, and part of the tower, are covered with hurdles or hides. The defenders strive to destroy the ram by catching it with chains, and by throwing down fire upon the house ; but the effect of the latter is obviated by water

poured out of the tower, and that of the former by men below, who, having thrown another chain over the ram, hang upon it with their whole weight. The bow is the principal weapon of war in use, both by the besiegers and the defenders: the arrows of the former are represented as taking fatal effect, and several of the latter are seen falling headlong from the walls.

In another part of the scene, the capture and deportation of the inhabitants are intimated. A warrior is driving off with blows several females, who seem to bewail their fate by tearing their hair, or by casting dust on their heads. One of the women is attended by a child about half-grown, on whose head she lays her hand. Horned cattle also are driven off by the side of the captives.

In a scene copied by Mr. Layard, in his valuable work, "Nineveh and its Remains," there is an interesting illustration of our subject. The Assyrians are besieging a walled city, consisting of many lofty towers, situated in a wooded and mountainous country, through which runs a river. The besiegers have planted their scaling-ladders against the walls, and are mounting to the assault. They are armed with coats of mail, girt with a girdle, and furnished with a double belt crossing on the back and breast. They wear elegant crested helmets, and their legs are defended by greaves. Each carries a large circular shield of wicker, probably covered with hides, and a spear in his hand; and most of them carry a straight

sword at the side, or a dagger in the girdle. Some shoot towards the battlements with bows. The walls of the city are thronged with the defenders, who are differently accoutred from their assailants. They wear a close skull-cup, and carry a shield of an oblong-square form. Some of them pour their arrows on the besiegers, others defend the battlements with long spears, and many have no other weapons than large stones, which they fling down with the hand on their enemies' heads. Their shields and the crevices of the battlements bristle with the arrows which have been shot at them; and some of the garrison, with arrows sticking in them, are falling wounded from the walls. In another part of this picture, separated by a line from the scene of conflict, is represented (as in the preceding case) the result: the carrying away of the prisoners into captivity. The men are made to march two and two, their hands bound together by manacles round the wrists, some before, and others behind the back; while the women walk before, carrying household utensils in their hands, and bags upon their backs. A mailed warrior follows each group of captives, holding the hindmost with the rope with which his hands are bound, or by the hair of his head; while he gratifies his cruelty, or else urges their speed, by blows with a stout staff, or with the butt end of the spear that he carries in his hand.

In other sculptures, "eunuchs and scribes are appointed to take an inventory of the spoil. They appear to have stood near the gates, and to have

written down with a pen, probably upon rolls of leather, the number of prisoners, sheep, and oxen, and the amount of the booty, which issued from the city. The women were sometimes taken away in bullock-carts, and are usually seen in the bas-reliefs bearing a part of their property with them, either a vase or a sack, perhaps filled with household stuff. They were sometimes accompanied by their children, and are generally represented as tearing their hair, throwing dust upon their heads, and bewailing their lot." *

Ezekiel I.—XI.

It was to this captive people that Ezekiel the priest delivered his prophecies, about eighty years after the last remnant had been removed from Samaria by Esarhaddon. Nineveh was now no more; the devouring fire had raged in her lofty palaces, and had consumed her pleasant furniture: she was now a heap of ruins, already partially buried in that "grave" with which Jehovah had threatened her, and which was soon entirely to close over her, blotting out her glory, and almost the place of her existence, from the memory of man.

And it was by the river of Chebar that the prophet stood, when he saw the awful but beautiful visions of the Glory of God, and of the ministering Cherubim; when the desolating judgments about to come upon

* Layard's Nineveh, vol. ii. p. 375.

rebellious Jerusalem were revealed to him ; and when he received the bitter roll of the book, written within and without with "lamentations, and mourning, and woe."

It had been the peculiar glory of Israel, that, from their very first existence as a nation, and their separation from the idolatrous Gentiles round about, Jehovah had dwelt among them in visible manifestation. In the pillar of the cloud by day, and of fire by night, He had defended, sheltered, directed, and illuminated them, and terrified and afflicted their enemies. On the summit of Sinai, in terrible majesty, the "fiery law" had been given, from a cloud and thick darkness, while "the smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." And when the beauteous tabernacle was made, for a dwelling-place for Jehovah of Hosts, "then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the Glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." Thenceforward through their journeyings in the wilderness, the cloud by day and the fire by night rested over the tent in the sight of all Israel; while the Shechinah itself, or the luminous presence of God, was shrouded under the beautiful veil, in the solitude of the Holy of Holies, where it dwelt above the mercy-seat, between the Cherubim.

After the entrance of Israel into the promised land, the Glory of God, that so long had sojourned in a shifting tent, became stationary, and dwelt among them ; and though, for a little while, in consequence

of abounding iniquity, "He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men, and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand," it was that He might pour contempt upon the helpless idols, and get honour to Himself among the heathen. Ungrateful Israel, it is true, little esteemed the high privilege of a present God, and were content with a human king, "like the nations:" thus the ark lay long in neglect, while the chosen people rejected the government of Jehovah, and hoped for the prosperity they sought in the rule of one from among themselves. But even this rejection the Lord overruled to fulfil His own purpose of setting up a royal throne on the holy Hill of Zion, where, by-and-by, His own King shall rule in righteousness, "as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds."

A while longer the Glory of Jehovah "abode in curtains," until the conquering David had thoroughly subdued the kingdom to himself; and then began the magnificent and peaceful reign of Solomon "on the throne of the Lord," not only typifying the peace and righteousness and prosperity of the coming kingdom, but also, in the erection of the magnificent Temple, foreshadowing the true "Man of rest," of whom it is said, "Even He shall build the temple of the Lord, and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne." No sooner was the glorious Temple completed, than "the cloud filled the house of the Lord: so that the priests could not

stand to minister because of the cloud ; for the Glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord."

The departure of this Glory, through the incorrigible apostasy of Israel, was what was revealed in vision to Ezekiel. Ten tribes had openly revolted from the house of David, God's king, and from the worship of Jehovah ; and they had at length, as we have already seen, been uprooted from their land, and carried into captivity. Judah still remained, but was fast treading in the steps of Israel : the cup of Jerusalem's iniquity was almost full, and the grieved and insulted Glory was preparing to leave the sanctuary,—lingering, indeed, and retiring with slow steps, as loath to leave His city, and give up "the beloved of His soul into the hands of her enemies."

The vision which Ezekiel saw was that of the *Kingly Glory* of Jehovah. Israel's throne was the place where He had been exercising direct and ostensible dominion upon earth, the nations having been left, as far as regards apparent interposition, to follow their own courses uncontrolled. The many-formed living creatures we consider as representing the executive administration of His will and purposes in heaven, while the lofty and involved wheels denote the same thing upon earth.

The prophet was among the captives on the banks of the Chebar, when he perceived a whirlwind coming out of the north with a great cloud. This denoted the terrible desolation that was about to fall on Jerusalem from Babylon. He saw also a fire infolding

itself, and diffusing a brightness around, out of the midst of which proceeded four living creatures. Their characteristic form was that of man; but each had four faces; each also had hands and feet, and four wings. As man had been made in the image and after the likeness of God, so the human form of these symbolic creatures represented the essential attributes of God as revealed in the Son; while the wings, feet, and different faces marked the Divine perfections in action or manifestation.

The faces were, first, that of a man, expressive of intelligence and reason; secondly, that of a lion, denoting majesty and power; thirdly, that of an ox, indicating strength exercised in patient long-suffering; and fourthly, that of an eagle, marking piercing discernment and rapidity of action.

The feet were the cleft feet of the ox, which are used to tread out the corn, separating the chaff from the wheat. They thus express judgment on the earth, dividing the righteous from the wicked, and treading down the latter in fury; while their perfect holiness in trampling on that which is so defiling, is signified by their "sparkling like the colour of burnished brass." The hands denote the skilfulness and precision with which the purposes of the Divine intelligence are carried out, connecting themselves with the human face, as the feet with that of the ox, and the wings with that of the eagle. The latter organs represent the rapidity of action in heaven, consequent on the will of God. "The living creatures

ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning."

The terrible beauty of these symbolic beings is thus described: "Their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning." These burning lamps of fire doubtless signify the Spirit of God (Rev. iv. 5), illuminating, convincing, consuming as He will.

Now, the prophet discerned a new feature in the mystic scene; which, from having been in heaven, seems now to be brought down to earth. A wheel so vast in its circumference, and so lofty, as to be dreadful to look upon, was seen beside each of the Cherubim; they were full of eyes round about, and there was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel.* These wheels were animated by the spirit of the living creatures, and seem to represent rapid action *on earth*, as the wings do *in heaven*. The

* Some very special and peculiar mystery is supposed by most persons to lie hid in this phrase, "A wheel in the middle of a wheel," which has become proverbial for any transactions that are intricately involved. But this appears to arise from a total misconception of the symbol; a misconception not of what it meant, but of what it was. It was surely nothing more complex than a double ring of vast dimensions, so fixed that one circle should be at right angles to the other, as sometimes two hoops are fastened, to carry May-day garlands. Thus the wheels would revolve toward each of the cardinal points of the compass, without turning on the *vertical* axis (see verse 17).

expression of the will of Jehovah is instantly obeyed in heaven or in earth: "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."

The action of the vision was upon the earth, for "the firmament was over their heads;" but "above the firmament was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire-stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it." Surely this glorious Person was none other than the Eternal Word, afterwards to be made flesh: thus manifesting beforehand His beauteous form, into which every saint is destined finally to be transformed.

Many subsequent visions of the Glory of God and of the ministering Cherubs were seen by Ezekiel, either at different parts of the river Chebar, or in the contiguous plain; and there were revealed to him, in vivid distinctness, the horrible abominations committed in Jerusalem, and the miseries and overwhelming destruction which He that sat on the throne was about to bring upon it.

In one of these glorious manifestations, the prophet had been caught by the locks of his head, and carried by the Spirit of God through the air to Jerusalem, either in reality (as afterwards happened to Philip), or in vision; and there he saw the dreadful apostasy of the chosen people of God. In a secret chamber, in the courts of the temple, were seventy ancients of the house of Israel, burning incense before a host

of idols, "creeping things and abominable beasts," whose forms, as in the temples of the heathen, were portrayed upon the wall round about. Then he was brought to the door of Jehovah's house, where sat women weeping for Tammuz, probably a deified man, the commemoration of whose death was attended with the most infamous practices. And, finally, between the very porch and the altar, were five-and-twenty men worshipping the rising sun, with their backs towards the sanctuary of Jehovah.

When this had been shown to the wondering prophet, the visible Glory left the place where it had hitherto dwelt between the Cherubim, and stood at the threshold of the house, where the commission to destroy the guilty city was given to the ministers of the Divine vengeance. After this, coals of fire were scattered over the city, to express the conflagration to which it would be soon subjected; and then the Glory makes another remove, and stands *over* the threshold, as ready to depart. Another lingering pause,—and the Glory of Jehovah departed from the threshold to some little distance, and stood over the Cherubim; and they, expanding their ample wings, all lustrous with many eyes, mounted up from earth, with the wheels beside them, and made another pause over the portals of the eastern gate of the temple. But before the visible manifestation of Jehovah's gracious presence departs from Jerusalem, He sends a message of love and comfort to His people, whom in fatherly chastisement He had for a while rejected,

promising to be to them "a little sanctuary" in the countries whither they should come; and, finally, to restore them in reconciliation and forgiveness to the land of Israel, in which they shall dwell in peace and righteousness and newness of spirit,—they His people, and He their God. "Then did the Cherubim lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them, and the Glory of the God of Israel was over them above. And the Glory of Jehovah went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain, which is on the east side of the city," even the Mount of Olives; and this was its last resting-place, for presently the whole glorious vision went up from the sight of the prophet into heaven.

Henceforward we find no manifestation of the kingly Glory of Jehovah on earth. He can no longer own His apostate people, but gives them up to be scattered among the nations; while supreme earthly dominion is taken away from Jerusalem, where hitherto it had been exercised, and given to the Gentiles. Four monarchies in succession, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, henceforth wield the sceptre of earthly power, until the dominion shall be restored to the throne of David, and He shall exercise it "whose right it is."

For a few centuries an interval of rest and of partial restoration was granted to Judah, a mitigation of their bondage; but the throne of David remained unoccupied; and when the rightful heir, Son of David and Son of God, presented Himself as their King,

His claims were denied, His person rejected ; and the crucifixion of God's chosen King sealed up at once the iniquity and the tribulation of Israel.

The rejected "King of the Jews" once more ascended from the Mount of Olives, and has found His place at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. He is seated on His Father's throne, until the time shall come for Him to assume His own (Rev. iii. 21), which will not be until Israel is ready to say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah!" But that time will come!

One more vision of the Glory of God was vouchsafed to Ezekiel. After a long course of prophecy, in which woe after woe is pronounced on Judah and the nations, bright days of blessing are predicted : Gog, that last terrible enemy, is slain upon the mountains of Israel ; the city and the temple are rebuilt in unprecedented grandeur, and everything is prepared for the reception of the "King of righteousness and King of peace." And then He returns, after the long and dreary absence ; and the enraptured seer once more beholds the winged Cherubim and the radiant wheels and the sapphire throne, even as he had seen at first. "And behold, the Glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east ; and His voice was like a noise of many waters ; and the earth shined with His glory. . . . And the Glory of Jehovah came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is towards the east. So the Spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court ; and behold, the

Glory of Jehovah filled the house. And I heard Him speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me. And He said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel *for ever*." So the name of the city, from that day, shall be Jehovah-Shammah, or, The Lord there.

O blessed day of righteousness and peace and joy! O happy "times of restitution!" when, Satan having been bound and shut up, and all enemies put under His feet, Jesus shall reign over a ransomed world! The groaning and travailing creation, earth oppressed with misery and sin, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.* All things that offend, and they which do iniquity, shall be purged out of His kingdom, and the righteous shall shine forth as the sun. All who have known and loved Him during the time of His rejection shall now be gathered to Him: His dead shall be raised, and His living ones shall be changed, and both shall put on their incorruptible bodies of light and glory. The whole Bride of the Lamb will be then perfected; and being arrayed in fine linen, clean and white,—the resplendent righteousness of Him who died to redeem her,—the

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* Literally thus :—"—— shall be delivered from the slavery of [consequent on] the lapse, into the liberty of [consequent on] the glory, of the children of God."

marriage of the Lamb shall come. It will be "the day of His espousals, and the day of the gladness of His heart." Heaven shall rejoice, and ring with reiterated Hallelujahs,—"for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Earth shall echo back the chorus of joy: "Jehovah reigneth, let the earth rejoice: let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together before Jehovah, for He cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people [peoples] with equity."

"Come then, and, added to Thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy! It was Thine
By ancient covenant, ere Nature's birth;
And Thou hast made it Thine by purchase since,
And overpaid its value with Thy blood.
Thy saints proclaim Thee King; and in their hearts
Thy title is engraven with a pen
Dipped in the fountain of eternal love.
Thy saints proclaim Thee King; and Thy delay
Gives courage to Thy foes, who, could they see
The dawn of Thy last advent, long desired,
Would creep into the bowels of the hills,
And flee for safety to the falling rocks.
Come then, and, added to Thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, as radiant as the rest,
Due to Thy last and most effectual work,
Thy word fulfilled, the conquest of a world!"

Cowper's Task, Book vi.

IV.

THE RIVER ULAI.

TOPOGRAPHY.

Uncertainty of Identification--The Abzal—Dizful—Khuzistan — Climate — Vegetable Productions— Animals — Ruins of Susa—Ancient Relics—Tomb of Daniel— Lions—The Royal River.

DANIEL'S VISION.

The Two-horned Ram — The One-horned Goat — Symbolic Animals — The Little Horn — Fulfilment of the Prophecy — Ultimate Result.

HAMAN AND ESTHER.

Ahasuerus' Banquet — Haman's Plot— His Defeat—Prosperity of the Jews.

CONSIDERABLE uncertainty has prevailed among learned men, as to what modern river represents the ancient Ulai of Daniel, the Eulæus of the Greek geographers. Three or four streams have contended for the identity: the Kerah, or Kerkhah, which falls into the Shat el Arab; the Abzal, or Dizful, and the Karun, which unite into one river, and fall into one of the mouths by which the Shat el Arab enters the Persian Gulf; and finally, the Abi-shapur, which rises near the Kerkhah, and falls into the Karun. Of these, however, the first seems to be excluded by the fact that Nearchus, the admiral of Alexander the Great, sailed from the Persian Gulf to Susa, without ascending the Shat el Arab. And the claims of the Karun rest on the supposition that the ruins of an ancient city on its banks are those of Shushan the Palace; though it seems sufficiently proved that they are only those of a city built by Shapur (Sapor), the Persian king, in the third century.

Mr. Kinneir considers the Abzal to be the Ulai. This river rises in the mountains of Irak, and flows nearly south, through a space of about four-and-a half degrees of latitude, till, as has been already said, it enters the Gulf, having been joined at some distance above by the Karun. The only place of any note on this river is the town of Dizful, which is

situate on its east bank, in a beautiful and spacious plain. It contains a population of about 20,000 souls, and is noted for its elegant bridge of twenty-two arches, the work of Sapor: the river is here about 300 yards wide. About twenty miles below the town the Abzal is joined by the Karun, and these rivers united form the ancient Pasitigris.

The country through which all these rivers flow is the modern province of Khuzistan, a part of the kingdom of Persia; and it formed in ancient days the kingdom of Susiana, which was governed by Abradates, the friend and ally of Cyrus. On his death it became incorporated with the dominions of the Persian monarch.

The northern part of this region is hilly; the central portion is an extensive plain, in many places very fertile; but towards the south and east this degenerates into a barren sandy desert, occasionally intersected by extensive morasses. The banks of the rivers are the only situations in this part that are capable of cultivation, where rice and a little wheat and barley are raised. There are also a few plantations of date-trees. The higher portions of the province include several extensive valleys, distinguished for their fertility and picturesque beauty.

The climate is so healthy that the region is the resort of a great number of invalids from the surrounding provinces. In summer the heat is great, and the inhabitants reside in subterranean cellars, for the sake of the coolness which they possess,

sleeping by night in the open air on the house-tops. The winters are mild, and the springs peculiarly delightful. Near the rivers already named, the soil is

SUGAR CANES AND POPPIES.

rich and the crops abundant. The sugar cane is extensively cultivated, and grows in great luxuriance; the quantity and excellence of the sugar manufactured here is considered as giving name to the pro-

vince, for Khuzistan is said to signify *sugar country*. Indigo is cultivated around Dizful, and in the neighbourhood of Shuster a great quantity of opium is produced from the large and beautiful oriental poppy.

Among the animals of this region may be mentioned the wild ass, "used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure." This is a beautiful and active animal, and so swift that it can be hunted down only by relays of horses and dogs; it is of a light mouse brown, with the same black cross on its shoulders that marks the breed with which we are familiar. The wild boar inhabits the thickets, and makes destructive incursions upon the cultivated grounds; it is a bold and ferocious creature. Jackals and hyenas are very abundant, and their nocturnal howls as they prowl for their prey are truly terrifying. These sounds are occasionally exchanged for the scream of the beautiful but sanguinary leopard, or the roar of the still more formidable lion. Numerous herds of gazelles and other elegant species of antelopes afford food to these beasts of prey. Many of the animals, and in particular the birds, are the very same as those of southern Europe; and even the familiar songsters of our own native hedges are abundantly found there. Venomous reptiles are numerous, and many sorts of lizards, including the singular chameleon; and various species of insects are annoying and destructive. The ravages of the locusts often produce lamentable consequences.

About seven miles west of Dizful commence the ruins of Shus, the ancient Shushan, or Susa, the royal palace of the Persian kings, and the capital of the kingdom of Susiana. The word Shus in the Pehlivi language signifies "delightful;" and is indicative of that pleasantness of situation and of climate which made this city the favourite residence of Cyrus and his successors, in preference to the ancient and magnificent Babylon. The mouldering heaps that alone remain of its costly palaces extend over a space of twelve miles, reaching nearly to the banks of the Kerkhah, the ancient Choaspes. Over this immense tract are strewn mounds like those of Babylon; huge hillocks of earth and rubbish, covered with broken bricks and fragments of coloured tiles. The largest and most remarkable of the mounds are about two miles from the Kerkhah. The first, according to Kinneir, is a mile in circumference, and 100 feet high; the second is rather less in elevation, but of twice the extent. They are called by the inhabitants the Palace and the Castle, and resemble the pyramids of Babylon; but are not wholly composed of brick, but of clay and pieces of tile, with irregular layers of brick and mortar, five or six feet thick, to serve as a prop to the mass. Large blocks of marble, covered with sculptures, are often discovered by the wandering Arabs, when searching for treasure, which they believe to be hidden in the ruins.

Sir Henry Rawlinson thus speaks of these remains:

"The great mound of Susa forms the north-western extremity of a large irregular platform of mounds, which appear to have constituted the fort of the city; while the great tumulus represents the site of the inner citadel. By a rough calculation with the sextant, I found the height of the lower platform to be between eighty and ninety feet, and that of the great mound to be 165 feet; the platform, which is square, I estimated to measure two miles and a-half. The mound, which I paced, measured 1,100 yards round the base, and 850 round the summit. The slope is very steep; so steep, indeed, as only to admit of ascent by two pathways." Sir H. Rawlinson saw on the mound a slab, with an inscription of thirty-three lines in the arrow-headed character, and three Babylonian sepulchral urns, imbedded in the soil; and in another place there was exposed to view, a few feet below the surface, a flooring of brickwork: while the summit of the mound was thickly strewn with broken pottery, glazed tiles, and kiln-burnt bricks.

Sir Robert Ker Porter has given figures of some curious relics of antiquity found in the palace of Susa. One of these is interesting as containing, among other objects, specimens of compound animals, reminding us of those symbolic forms seen in vision when this place was in its glory. The *cross*, too, appears on it as a sacred emblem, as we know it was with the ancient Egyptians, a thousand years before the Christian era.

At the foot of the highest pyramid is a small building, comparatively modern, inclosing an ancient tomb, believed to contain the dust of the prophet Daniel. There is nothing improbable in the tradition, for here we know from inspired authority he was at the latter part of his life. And Josephus speaks of an edifice built by this venerable man at Susa, which was remaining in freshness and undiminished beauty at the time he wrote. It was used as a burying-place for the Persian and Parthian monarchs; and he adds that, in respect to the memory of the founder, the conservation of the edifice was always committed to a Jew. "The copies of Josephus that are now extant do indeed place this building in Ecbatana, in Media; but St. Jerome, who gives us the same account of it word for word out of Josephus, and professeth so to do, placeth it in Susa, in Persia, which makes it plain that the copy of Josephus which he made use of had it so. And it is most likely to have been the true reading."* From the expression used by the prophet, that he "did the king's business" at Shushan the palace, conjoined with what we know of his holding high and honourable office in the Babylonish state, it is not improbable that he was governor or viceroy over the province of Susiana.

The deserted site of the once "delightful" city is now a gloomy wilderness, infested by lions, hyenas,

* Prideaux's Connexion.

and other ravenous beasts, that roam unchecked over its silent and crumbled walls. The prowling savage of the jungle has his residence in the halls that once were radiant with light and beauty, and his hoarse roar echoes on the spot where once the laugh and song were heard. The traveller to whom we are indebted for our information concerning this ancient site was compelled by the dread of these animals to seek shelter for the night within the walls that encompass the Tomb of Daniel.

About ten miles to the north of the ruins of Susa rises a stream called the Abi-shapur; it flows in a narrow but deep channel past the Tomb of the Prophet, and past the western foot of the great mound. This river is navigable from the ruins to its junction with the Pasitigris, at a considerable distance below the union of the Abzal and the Karun. The water is said to be heavy and unwholesome, but that of the Abzal and that of the Kerkhah are in high estimation. This circumstance militates against the opinion of Sir Henry Rawlinson, that the Abi-shapur is the Ulai, or Eulæus; for the water of this latter, as well as that of the Choaspes (Kerkhah), was so delicious that the Persian kings would drink of none other. Milton alludes to this when he speaks of

> —"Susa, by Choaspes' amber stream,
> The drink of none but kings." *

This, however, is a poetic licence; for it does not

* Paradise Regained, ii.

appear that the water was limited to the royal use, but that the monarch confined himself to it. Herodotus tells us that wherever the king of Persia went, he was attended by a number of wagons, drawn by mules, to carry the water of these streams, which, having been first boiled, was deposited in silver vessels. Ælian informs us that Xerxes, during his invasion of Greece, came to a desert place, and was exceedingly thirsty; but his baggage being at a considerable distance, proclamation was made that whoever had any of the water of the Eulæus should produce it for the use of the king. One man was found who possessed a small quantity, but it had been kept so long that it was quite offensive to the senses. Xerxes, however, drank it, and expressed his gratitude to the donor, calling him his friend and preserver.

Daniel VIII.

THE Chaldean monarchy, the lion empire of Nebuchadnezzar, was drawing near its end in the person of the degenerate Belshazzar; when the "beloved" Daniel, who had already seen in vision the overthrow of that power by the growing Medes and Persians, and the ultimate displacement of the latter by the leopard dominion of Greece, was favoured with another revelation of the destinies and fortunes of these two monarchies. The prophet was at the city of Shushan, which must therefore at this time have

been in the possession of the Babylonian power; and he stood by the river Ulai. Suddenly he saw in vision, on the bank of the river, a ram with two horns, both of them high, but one loftier than the other, though it had risen last. The ram was seen pushing westward and northward and southward so vigorously that no beasts could stand before him; but he did according to his own will, and became great. While the prophet considered this, a he-goat came rushing from the west so swiftly that he seemed not to touch the ground, and this animal had but a single notable horn on his forehead. In the fury of his power the goat rushed upon the ram, broke his two horns, overthrew him, cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him, nor could any deliver him. The he-goat on this waxed very great; but in the height of his strength his notable horn was broken, and was succeeded by four horns that rose up in its place. "And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground, and it practised and prospered."

To an inquiry propounded by one attendant holy one of another, as to the duration of this iniquitous power, the answer was given in the following enigma: "Unto two thousand three hundred days: then shall the sanctuary be cleansed;" or, more literally, "unto evening-morning, 2,300: then shall the sanctuary be justified."

Such then was the vision which passed before the wondering senses of Daniel; but as yet it conveyed no definite meaning to him. Presently, however, there stood before him a human form; and a voice was heard arising from between the banks of the Ulai, saying, "Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision." The obedient angel then explained the meaning of the symbols.

The two-horned ram signified the Medo-Persian kingdom, which had in a former vision been ex-

COIN OF PERSIA.

pressed by a ravenous bear. In the present instance the symbols chosen are those which were accepted as national emblems of the respective kingdoms. That Persia was of old represented by a ram, there is abundant evidence. Ammianus Marcellinus states that the king of Persia wore a ram's head of gold, set with

precious stones, instead of a diadem. The type of a ram is seen on ancient Persian coins, as represented on the preceding page. And travellers have observed that rams' heads, with horns of unequal height, are still to be seen sculptured on the pillars of Persepolis.

The Persians, attaining to greater eminence than the Medes, who yet were the more ancient people, gave name to the empire, which speedily extended its dominion westward as far as Greece, northward as far as the Euxine and Caspian, and southward as far as Egypt.

As the ram was the acknowledged emblem of Persia, so was the goat of Macedon. For the first colony of that country, being directed by the oracle to take a goat for a guide, followed a flock of these animals, and built a city where they stopped, which was called *Ægeæ*, from *Ægus*, a goat, and the people themselves took the title of *Ægeadæ*. Figures of a goat with a single horn are found on ancient Macedonian monuments; and at Persepolis the subjection of the Macedonians to the Persians, in the reign of Amyntas, B.C. 547, is represented by a man in Persian dress holding by the single horn an animal of this kind. A gem engraved in the Florentine collection, and copied on the opposite page, represents the Persian symbol and the Macedonian united. This was probably engraved after the conquest of Persia by Alexander.

The notable horn between the eyes of the goat is explained to denote the first (or chief) king just

named; who with unexampled rapidity broke the power of Persia, bearing down all opposition, till it was utterly destroyed as an independent monarchy. But in the prime of life, and in the midst of his conquests, Alexander was cut off, and his family in a few years became extinct; and at length his great empire was divided among four of his principal captains, Cassander, Lysimachus, Ptolemy, and Seleucus.

Respecting the remainder of this remarkable vision, the tyrannical "little horn" that arose out of one of the four, some diversity of judgment exists among the students of prophecy. Some apply it to Antiochus Epiphanes, others to Mohammedanism, others to the Papacy (indubitably the "little horn" of the

ANCIENT GEM.

previous vision), and yet others to a personal Antichrist still to arise. There is, doubtless, a family likeness in all the great blasphemers of God, and persecutors of His people, which renders many of the expressions in which one is described, more or less applicable to the others. This is not the place for discussing controverted interpretations of prophecy; but we may modestly state our own judgment, that

Rome, first Pagan, and then Papal, is primarily intended. It was first introduced on the stage of prophecy, and came into contact with God's people, by the conquest of Macedon; and the agreement of its subsequent course with the prophecy will be seen by the following parallel scheme:

And out of one of them came forth a little horn which waxed exceeding great toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land.	From gaining footing in Macedon came the Roman power, whose force, little at first, soon greatly increased, conquering Egypt, Asia, and Judea.
And it waxed great even to the host of heaven; and	It subjugated the Jewish priesthood and government,
it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.	persecuted the people of God, putting to death the apostles and ministers of the gospel;
Yea, he magnified himself even to the Prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down.	crucified the Lord Jesus, and finally destroyed the city and temple.
And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice, by reason of transgression,	The reason of the Jews being given up by God was their unparalleled wickedness.
and it cast down the truth to the ground, and it practised and prospered.	After this Rome Pagan and Papal became the bitter opposer of God's truth, through many centuries, without any check to its wickedness.
But he shall be broken without hand.	Yet the Lord shall consume him with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of His coming.

The duration of *the vision* was not thoroughly explained to the prophet at the time; but the revelation of the "seventy weeks" of Daniel ix. seems evidently (see verses 21—23) intended to supply this explanation. By the application of this key, therefore, we gather that 70 weeks, or 490 years of the 2,300, would expire at or near the death of the Lord Jesus;* and therefore we have reason to hope that the cleansing (or "justifying") of the sanctuary will not be long delayed, and that every blasphemous and tyrannical opponent of the Lord Jesus will soon be destroyed.

Meanwhile let us be thankful that the great Head of the Church has not treated us as servants, "for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth," but as friends; for He has made us partakers of His counsels, and revealed to us the grand events, and many of the details of His mysterious purposes. Very many things are plain in the prophecies; others are fulfilling before our eyes, and will soon be cleared-up by their accomplishment: and if some few things yet remain impenetrably dark and inexplicable, it is not that we may slothfully turn away from the "sure word of prophecy" as if it were a sealed book (for on the study of it a peculiar blessing is pronounced); but that we may learn humility, modesty, faith, and dependence upon the Holy Ghost who has indited the

* Or, perhaps, at the giving up of the Holy City to desolation by the Roman armies (verses 24 and 27), in the year 70.

Word. The great result of the contest between the powers of light and darkness, between Christ and Satan, is revealed clearly and unambiguously: for a time evil seems to triumph; but yet a little while "and all iniquity shall stop her mouth." The Lord Jesus will take to Himself His great power, and reign; and His oppressed and often persecuted saints, always dear to Him, shall be avenged, and shall be exalted to share His throne; every form of Antichristian error and wickedness shall be consumed out of the earth; Satan himself shall be bound and shut up; Israel shall be restored to earthly supremacy; Jerusalem shall be the throne of the Lord; the Gentiles shall be converted to Him; wars shall cease to the ends of the earth; and peace and joy shall be universal. This glorious consummation we confidently expect on the authority of God Himself; and for this may we wait with earnest hope, continually praying, "Thy kingdom come!"

Esther I.—X.

THE beautiful city of Shushan was the scene of a series of most interesting and instructive events, which form the subject of the inspired book of Esther. They show how truly Jehovah was a sanctuary to His people in the countries whither they were scattered; how His providence watches, overrules, and directs human affairs; and how easily He can

thwart the best-laid schemes of wicked men. The whole history is a comment upon the word of the wise king: "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

The Persian empire seems at this time to have attained the height of its glory, and the widest extent of its dominion; Ahasuerus, who is now considered by the best critics to be the same as Xerxes, "reigned from Ethiopia even unto India, over an hundred and seven-and-twenty provinces." His firm establishment on the throne of this mighty empire he celebrated by a festivity of extraordinary splendour, showing to all his princes, nobles, and servants, "the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty." These rejoicings lasted for a hundred and eighty days, or exactly half-a-year, and were wound up by a week of feasting for all the citizens of Shushan, great and small, "in the court of the garden of the king's palace." The company seems to have been entertained in a sort of pavilion or tent, composed of white, green, and blue hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble; the couches on which the guests reclined were of gold and silver; and the pavement beneath was formed of red and blue, and white and black marble, arranged doubtless in those gorgeous Arabesque patterns which have been lately discovered in the pavements of Egypt and Assyria. The tables were furnished with vessels of gold, all of them diverse in their forms and ornaments, out of

which the guests drank the choicest wines in an abundance proportioned to the royal state of the king.

The splendour of this magnificent palace agrees with what the Greeks have narrated concerning it; for they tell us that it was built with white marble, and that its pillars were covered with gold and precious stones. The treasures of the kings of Persia were generally kept there, and Alexander the Great found in it 50,000 talents of gold, equal to about 274 millions of pounds sterling, besides jewels of inestimable value, and an immense number of gold and silver vessels.

It was at this royal feast that the incident occurred which resulted in the marriage of the king with Esther, a Jewish maiden of great beauty and virtue; through whose advancement her people, who were still in great numbers in the Persian dominions, were preserved from entire extirpation. The insolence of Haman, a worthless favourite of the king—his rage at the refusal of Mordecai the Jew to pay court to him—his diabolical plot to destroy the whole Jewish race—his ridiculous vanity, and his sudden fall, are recorded with inimitable simplicity in the sacred narrative; but the story is too long for us to do more than refer to it. The vile Amalekite proved the truth of the Psalmist's words: "He made a pit and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made; his mischief shall return upon his own head; and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate."

The plot which had been laid for the captive Jews

was used by God to advance their comfort and consideration. The pious Mordecai was exalted to fill the place which Haman had dishonoured; the edict commanding the massacre of the Jews was countervailed by another, permitting them to defend themselves (for, by the absurd custom of the Medes and Persians, no law once issued could be absolutely revoked); and, as the favour of the king was plainly seen in the latter document, and the power of Mordecai was now great, the Hebrews were almost everywhere countenanced by the authorities, and those who did rise against them were overcome and slain.

Meanwhile, neither the queen nor the king's chief minister forgot in prosperity that they were the covenant people of God; they neither abused the royal favour, nor became ashamed of their religion, nor forgot their connection with their captive brethren; but used their greatness for the welfare and peace of their people, and doubtless for the spread of true religion. It is not without reason supposed that the missions of Ezra and Nehemiah to the land of their fathers, the favourable edicts granted to them by this monarch for the rebuilding of desolated Jerusalem, and his kindly permission and encouragement to the Jews yet remaining in his dominions to return from their captivity, were mainly owing, under God, first to the favour which Esther obtained in the king's eyes, and afterwards to the good offices of Mordecai.

V.

THE RIVER JORDAN.

THE JORDAN.

Mountain Ranges—The Ghor—Sources—Paneas—Phiala—Tel-el-Kady—Hasbeyah—Waters of Merom—Lotus Lily—Lake of Gennesaret—Lower Jordan—Rapids—Windings—Scenery—Trees and Flowers—Double Valley—Dead Sea—Its Ancient Condition—Depression—Pillar of Salt—Scene of Desolation—Apples of Sodom—Geological Character.

THE DIVIDING OF THE WATERS.

The Wilderness Sojourn—The Plains of Moab—The Spies—The Passage—The Twelve Stones—Death of the Believer.

THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD.

Bethabara—Hope deferred—The Baptist—Jesus Baptized—Mystic Teaching of the Incident—Results—The Scene of the Baptism—The Pilgrims.

THE FORDS OF THE JORDAN.

The Judges—Ehud and Eglon—Gideon—The Three Hundred—Faithfulness of Jehovah—Jephthah—Shibboleth.

THE TRANSLATION OF ELIJAH.

Testimony—Apostasy—Elisha's Request—The Chariot—The Rapture—The Mantle—The Change of the Quick.

NAAMAN THE SYRIAN.

Happiness not dependent on Circumstances—The Leper—The Little Maid—The Cleansing—The Fountain for Sin.

THE SWIMMING IRON.

The Sons of the Prophets—The Tamarisk Tree—The Axe-head—The Tenderness of God.

CÆSAREA PHILIPPI.

Peter's Confession—Interesting Monument.

DAN.

Early Idolatry—The Golden Calf—Fountain of Tel-el-Kady—Tortoise—Buffalo.

THE rivers which we have hitherto noticed would, for the most part, connect themselves in the mind of an Israelite with ideas of hostile military power, blasphemous enmity against Jehovah, and the captivity of His people. We come now to wander by the banks of those streams that watered the sacred soil of Israel, diffusing fertility and gladness throughout that favoured country, which was described as "a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills." * The most eminent of these, not less for its size than for the interesting events with which its history is connected, is the Jordan.

The mountain ridges of Palestine run in lines nearly parallel with its Mediterranean shore. The lofty range of Lebanon, overlooking from its snowy summit the Great Sea on the one hand and the Syrian desert on the other, gradually merges into the mountains of Galilee and of Samaria, and the hill country of Judea. Over against this chain to the eastward there rises another, parallel with it, and nearly agreeing with it in the varied elevation of its different portions. Antilibanus ("Lebanon toward the sun-rising") is continued in Mount Hermon, with its lofty peak of ancient renown, whence the

* Deut. viii. 7.

mountains of Bashan gradually sink till they are lost in the plains that border the Lake of Gennesaret. Thence beyond the river Jarmuk they again begin to rise in rugged peaks; and the hills of Gilead and of the land of Moab stretch from north to south, until the rocky belt of Mount Seir rears its frowning masses of stone in a thousand strange forms, divided by horrid yawning chasms, in the most dreary desolation, and forms a fit gateway to the desert of burning sand that lies beyond.

Between these mountain ranges lies the Ghor, or Valley of the Jordan, which, from the sources of that river to the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, extends through a length of about one hundred and seventy miles. Its breadth is irregular: at its head there are not more than a few miles from the summit of one ridge to that of the opposite; and the average width, to a distance considerably below the Lake of Gennesaret, may be considered as not above ten miles; but, as the hills stretch to the southward, they still diverge from each other, until they again approach, to inclose, as with walls of precipitous rock, the Dead Sea.

"The Jordan is entitled to take its place as the chief of Syrian rivers, and perhaps this is distinction enough for it; but, beside this, it may be said, that for a line of nearly three thousand miles along the coast of Africa and of Syria, no one stream except the Nile contributes so large a volume of water to the Mediterranean as the Jordan contributes to the Dead

Sea; and that all Arabia has not one river comparable to it. . . . But the dignity of the Jordan arises from other circumstances than the volume of its waters or the extent of its course." *

SOURCE OF THE JORDAN.

The principal source of this river has been from very ancient times considered to be at Paneas, or Cæsarea Philippi, where it rises in a very romantic manner. Josephus thus describes it: "At Panium . . . there is a mountain that is elevated to a

* Dr. Kitto's Palestine, vol. ii. p. 153.

vast height: and in its side at the bottom a dark cavern opens; within which there is a horrible gulf, descending abruptly to a great depth. It contains a mighty quantity of water, which is quite still and unmoved; and when any one attempts to sound its depth, no length of cord is found sufficient to reach the bottom. Now the fountains of Jordan rise at the roots of this cavity, and, as some think, this is the utmost origin of Jordan." *

This cave has been described by modern travellers, and in particular by Burckhardt. Over its mouth the perpendicular face of the rock has been cut into niches with pillars for the reception of statues, the basal part of one being still to be seen. Inscriptions, now nearly illegible, were cut in the rock near these recesses. The modern village of Baneas contains only about 150 houses; but heaps of stones and fragments of pillars lie around, covering an extensive space, on which stood the royal city which bore the name of the Tetrarch of Trachonitis.

In another passage Josephus connects the water which flows from this cave with that of a perfectly circular lake, about fifteen miles distant, called, from its bowl-like form, Phiala: for, as he asserts, some chaff having been thrown into the lake by Philip, emerged from beneath the cave at Paneas; whence it was concluded that a subterranean passage existed between the two.

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* Bell. Jud. I. xxi. 3.

Captains Irby and Mangles seem to have discovered this interesting place. Having entered a rich little plain at the southern foot of Mount Hermon, they found a rivulet which, flowing through the plain, rushes picturesquely through a deep chasm, and joins the Jordan at Baneas. Ascending a little higher, they saw a very singular lake, about a mile in circumference, apparently perfectly circular, and surrounded on all sides by sloping hills richly wooded. A remarkable circumstance was, that they could perceive no supply or discharge of its waters, which appeared perfectly still, though clear and limpid: a great many wild fowl were swimming on it.*

Another source of the Jordan is found about three miles to the west of Baneas, at a place called Tel-el-Kady, which is believed to be the site of the ancient Dan or Laish, the northern boundary of the land. It unites with the other stream five or six miles below the emergence of the latter from the cave.

Yet a fourth stream, the Hasbeyah, presents a claim to be considered as the source of this river, and one which, but for the prescriptive right of the former, must be acknowledged as the best of all. It rises more than twenty miles farther to the north-east, on the northern side of Hermon, around whose base it pours a considerable stream, being, at the point where it runs by Paneas, as broad, as deep, and as rapid as the Jordan itself at Jericho. Whether it unites its

* Irby and Mang. Trav. pp. 286—289.

waters with those of the former streams, or falls into the lake Houle by its own distinct channel, are points not yet quite ascertained.

The plain through which these rivers flow is most fertile. Numerous plantations of mulberry-trees adorn the banks, and the surrounding hills are covered with groves of oak. The richest pasture covers the whole plain, except where it is cultivated; and cattle are driven by the Arab tribes from considerable distances to feed on its luxuriance. The labour of the plough, though employed but to a limited extent, is rewarded by crops of wheat and other corn of excellent quality and in rich abundance. Thistles, those sure tokens of a vigorous soil, grow to so gigantic a size, as to reach up to the height of a horse's back, to the annoyance of his rider; and that curious plant, the mandrake, with its purple blossoms and fragrant apple-like fruit, is abundant in this region.

Nearly in the midst of this beautiful plain, the waters of the several streams we have noticed dilate into a lake of considerable extent. It is known in early Hebrew history as the Waters of Merom; at the time of Roman dominion it had received the name of Samochonites; but in modern times, at least since the Crusades, it has borne the Arab appellation of Bahr-el-Houlè.

After the winter rains this lake forms a beautiful sheet of water, eleven or twelve miles long by about four broad; but in summer the northern half becomes a mere morass, covered with rushes, through which

several streams wind their silver courses. Among these grow also abundantly the reeds which are used in the East for pens, as well as others of stouter make, which serve for lances and arrows. On the surface

THE MANDRAKE.

float the broad leaves and beautiful white flowers of the Lotus-lily (*Nymphæa*), the seeds of which, as well as the large tuberous roots, are frequently roasted in hot ashes and eaten. The elegant blossoms rise out

of the water at sunrise, and expand themselves to the beam, but on the approach of night close their corollas and retire beneath the surface. They are no less fragrant than beautiful. Among these flowers multitudes of aquatic fowl of various species repose unmolested, and the reedy shores and shallows conceal thousands of wading-birds.

THE LOTUS-LILY.

The Jordan, issuing from the Waters of Merom, flows down through a narrow rocky channel with considerable rapidity, as a noisy torrent. Its course is almost concealed by the groves of plane-trees and nebeks that line its banks, and especially by the luxuriant oleanders that cluster thickly in every part, flushing the scene through the spring and early

summer with the hue of their gorgeous flowers, like a vast bed of roses. After having brawled through its stony channel for about ten miles, it enters that wide and beautiful lake, the name of which will always be associated with pleasant and holy reminiscences to the Christian, the Lake of Gennesaret, the Sea of Tiberias.

This expanse of water is about twelve or fifteen miles in length, and about half as broad. Its surface is 328 feet below the level of the Mediterranean, and its depth is about 350 fathoms. Its picturesque appearance is well described by many travellers; but by none more agreeably than by Dr. Clarke, who viewed it from the most favourable point, the hill known as the Mount of Beatitudes. "From this point," he observes, "a view was presented, which, for its grandeur, independently of the interest excited by the different objects contained in it, has nothing equal to it in the Holy Land.

"From this situation we perceived that the plain over which we had been so long riding [from the west] was itself very elevated. Far beneath appeared other plains, one lower than the other, in a regular gradation, reaching eastward, as far as the surface of the Sea of Tiberias. This immense lake, almost equal, in the grandeur of its appearance, to that of Geneva, spreads its waters over all the lower territory. Its eastern shores exhibit a sublime scene of mountains towards the north and south, and they *seem* to close in at either extremity, both towards Cho-

razin, where the Jordan enters, and the *Aulon* or *Campus Magnus*, through which this river flows into the Dead Sea. The cultivated plains reaching to its borders, which we beheld at an amazing depth below our view, resembled, by the different hues their various produce presented, the motley pattern of a vast carpet. To the north appeared many snowy summits, towering beyond a series of intervening mountains. We considered them as the summits of Libanus; but the Arabs belonging to our caravan called the principal eminence Jebel-el-Sieh. The summit was so lofty that the snow entirely covered the upper part of it, investing all the higher part with that perfect white and smooth velvet-like appearance, which snow only exhibits when it is very deep." *

Dr. Kitto thus speaks of the minuter features of this interesting scene,—

"The feathered tribes seem to make the lake a favourite resort. Multitudes of song-birds harbour in the northernmost groves, and their innumerable happy voices mingle with the rush of waters, where the river hastens to the lake. The margin and surface of the lake itself presents large flocks of storks, wild-ducks, and diving-birds; pelicans are not wanting; while here and there vultures are assiduously engaged with their carrion-prey; or eagles, heavily flapping their broad wings, rise to their aëries in the

* Clarke's Travels, part ii.

mountains. But when the heat of the summer sun, intensely concentrated on the borders of this deep basin, has absorbed all the moisture which the earth contained, and utterly dried up the green herbage which gave a cheerful aspect to the scene, the effect of the whole, in the entire absence of trees, is very different; more dull, heavy, sad, but not less, perhaps, in unison with the general tone of feeling with which the Christian pilgrim is prepared to regard this memorable lake. Its surface is usually in a state of dead calm; and, in the universal stillness, the gentle splash of its water upon the pebbles of the shore is distinctly heard, and is, indeed, almost the only sound that strikes the ear. Not a single boat of any kind is seen upon the lake; and, now that the Arab has removed his tents to the higher country, the eye may wander round its borders in vain, seeking for any other signs of habitation than the mean town of Tabaria, and one or two miserable villages. The saddened traveller may gaze for hours over the scene without observing a single human being, or indeed any living creature, save the large water-fowl, whose sole presence tends rather to increase than to diminish the desolation of the view."*

The current of the Jordan through the midst of the lake is distinct, and easily observed by the smooth flowing of its waters, while the rest of the surface is rippled with the breeze. At the southern extremity it

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* Phys. Hist. of Palestine, vol. ii. p. 165.

emerges in a single stream, which in spring is about forty feet across; and thence it flows through the Ghor, or valley to which it gives its own name, until its course is finally lost in the leaden waters of the Dead Sea.

Until the late American expedition, our acquaintance with this sacred river was almost confined to a few points at which it is fordable. That expedition descended the river in two metallic boats, and, though with much labour and often in imminent peril, succeeded in reaching the Dead Sea. The stream is full of rapids and appalling descents, particularly in the upper part of its course; no fewer than twenty-seven of these occurring, of threatening depth and force, besides a great number of less magnitude. Near the débouchure of the Jarmuk there is a cascade of eleven feet in height, below which are two fierce rapids, each 150 yards in length, bristling with black rocks, whose points rise above the foaming surface. Sunken and half-submerged rocks are very numerous throughout great part of the course; and in some parts there are a number of small islets. The course of the river is exceedingly tortuous, forming an unending series of serpentine curves; hence, though the Dead Sea is only about sixty miles distant from the Lake of Gennesaret, the Jordan traverses, in that distance, a course of at least two hundred miles. Near the mouth of the Jabbok, there is a sudden break-down in the bed of the Jordan, which appears to be connected with the depression of the bottom of the Dead Sea.

In many parts the scenery on the river is very picturesque: sometimes the turbid torrent madly rushes between perpendicular cliffs; at others it shoots round the base of a mountain, and then again flows between low banks, covered with shrubs, and trees, and fragrant flowers. Here and there a brawling rivulet pours its tiny addition of crystal water into the discoloured current of Jordan, and one or two rivers of more pretension add their tribute, drained from the sides of the receding wadies.

The trees that throw their branches over the Jordan's margin are not usually of large size; they are principally the willow, the fern-like elegant tamarisk, and the gharrab, or honey-tree, a plant resembling the olive, which is said to distil from its poplar-like leaves a sweet fluid, of the taste and consistence of honey, which may have been the honey in the wood that "dropped," of which Jonathan ate after the slaughter of the Philistines. The oleander is abundant, as it is upon all the streams of Palestine; its pale crimson flowers contrast finely with the white fringed blossoms of the asphodel.

In some places where the banks slope gradually up to the higher terraced level, the ground is covered with a sort of wild oats, thin and worthless, yet presenting somewhat of beauty in its silvery waves as the breeze plays over it; and revealing, as the gusts, sweeping down the hills, bend it low, a flush of sanguine crimson from the anemones that cover the surface beneath in thick and matted profusion. Patches

of yellow daisy-like flowers, or of wild mustard, look "like little golden islands in an incarnadined ocean;" and several species of thistle, of gigantic size, spread a purple glow over the sides of the otherwise naked hills.

The Ghor itself is about six miles wide; but in the lower part the retiring of the mountains on each side gives it a breadth of ten or twelve, inclosing on the one side the Plains of Moab, and on the other the Plains of Jericho. The greater part of this level is little better than a parched and barren desert; though the courses of the numerous rivulets which furrow it on both sides relieve the general sterility with many patches of verdure. But there is a lower valley, about three-quarters of a mile wide, through the midst of which the river flows. The level of this vale is about forty feet lower than that of the general plain, and is covered with luxuriant vegetation, reeds and canes forming in many places an impenetrable brake, intermingled with tamarisks and willows, and other trees.

The close and matted vegetation of this lower valley affords a shelter for wild beasts and other animals, which lodge here in security from the assaults of man. But the winter rains and the melting of the mountain snows in spring fill the bed of Jordan; and his swollen waters, overflowing the ordinary banks, inundate this verdant tract, and drive the lurking tenants into the open plains above. The rage and ferocity of the more powerful beasts of prey, that formerly were

found here, when thus dislodged from their retreat, are more than once alluded to by the prophet Jeremiah: "Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan!" *

The bed of the river itself varies, both in depth and width, in different places; sometimes being not more than twenty yards in breadth, at others upwards of a hundred; in some places forming a deep and rapid current, and in others easily fordable. The season, as already intimated, greatly affects the volume of its waters.

For the last few miles the Jordan runs between banks of sand, and pours a considerable quantity of water into the Dead Sea. At the embouchure it is about a hundred yards wide, and is deep and rapid. Yet, so dense are the saline waters of that awful lake, that the current of the river seems unable to enter among them, but ceases to be perceived at once at the very point of contact.

We shall, then, consider the Jordan as terminating here, for out of this mysterious sea no stream emerges. Yet there can be scarcely a doubt that in ancient times, before the terrible destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone out of heaven, the area now occupied by these baleful waters was a lovely and fertile plain, through the length of which the Jordan flowed, well watering it everywhere. The river must then have had an outlet; and probably

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* Jer. xlix. 19; l. 44.

flowed through the valley called the Wady Arabah, which extends from the southern extremity of the Dead Sea to the Elanitic Gulf, or eastern arm of the Red Sea. That no egress of waters can now take place in that direction is manifest, not only from the great depression of the surface of the lake, which is 1,300 feet below that of the Mediterranean, but also because a wall of rock now extends quite across the valley, about seven miles from its commencement. Both the depression of the plain, however, and the elevation of this ridge, may have been simultaneous results of the awful convulsion of nature in which the guilty cities were overwhelmed.

That the whole tract which is now covered by the Dead Sea *has* been depressed, the late researches of the American Exploring Expedition have abundantly proved. Referring to the words of the sacred narrative, that when Abraham looked toward *all* the land of the plain, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace, Lieutenant Lynch infers that the entire chasm was a plain *sunk* and *overwhelmed* by the wrath of God; and this inference he considers as warranted by the extraordinary character of the soundings obtained. The bottom of the Dead Sea consists of two submerged plains, an elevated and a depressed one. The former is the roundish bay which forms the southern extremity, separated from the rest of the sea by a promontory which runs nearly all across; the bottom in this part is pretty evenly about twelve or fifteen feet below the surface.

To this small bay Professor Robinson would limit the calamity which befel the guilty plain. The other area, the great body of the sea, has a nearly uniform depth of *a thousand feet;* while, through its centre, in a line corresponding with the course of the Jordan, there runs a ravine, cleaving the bottom to the depth of two hundred feet more.

The inference then is obvious, that once this level area formed the beauteous and fertile plain of Sodom, well watered everywhere by the Jordan (and probably many affluent streams), whose flood was poured along the ravine or deep bed running through it; and that the whole plain, after having had its bituminous crust devoured by "fire and brimstone out of heaven," was made to sink down suddenly a thousand feet, not in fragments, but in a mass, with the river-bed still cutting it, as an indelible memorial of the truth of the Word of God. The great and deep gulf thus formed then constituted a reservoir, into which the Jordan's waters were gradually poured, until they attained the level which they now possess.

On the western side of the southern bay or shallow lake, the American party discovered an object which at any place would have been considered a curiosity, but which in that locality, and considering the story of Lot's wife, cannot but be regarded with intense interest. On the side of the very remarkable isolated mountain which still bears the name of Usdum (Sodom), stands a pillar of salt! But we will give the description of this in the words of the discoverer.

"To our astonishment, we saw on the eastern side of Usdum, one-third the distance from its north extreme, a lofty round pillar, standing apparently detached from the general mass, at the head of a deep, narrow, and abrupt chasm. We immediately pulled in for the shore, and Dr. Anderson and I went up and examined it. The beach was a soft slimy mud encrusted with salt, and, a short distance from the water, covered with saline fragments and flakes of bitumen. We found the pillar to be of solid salt, capped with carbonate of lime, cylindrical in front, and pyramidal behind. The upper or rounded part is about forty feet high, resting on a kind of oval pedestal, from forty to sixty feet above the level of the sea. It slightly decreases in size upwards, crumbles at the top, and is one entire mass of crystallization. A prop or cross-buttress connects it with the mountain behind, and the whole is covered with debris of a light stone-colour. Its peculiar shape is doubtless attributable to the action of the winter rains. The Arabs had told us in vague terms that there was to be found a pillar somewhere upon the shores of the sea; but their statements in all other respects had proved so unsatisfactory that we could place no reliance upon them."*

The same writer describes, in a graphic manner, the awfully interesting vicinity of this pillar of salt:—

"It was indeed a scene of unmitigated desolation.

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* Jordan and the Dead Sea, p. 307.

On one side, rugged and worn, was the salt mountain of Usdum, with its conspicuous pillar, which reminded us at least of the catastrophe of the plain; on the other were the lofty and barren cliffs of Moab, in one of the caves of which the fugutive Lot found shelter. To the south was an extensive flat intersected by sluggish drains, with the high hills of Edom semi-girdling the salt plain where the Israelites repeatedly overthrew their enemies; and to the north was the calm and motionless sea, curtained with a purple mist, while many fathoms deep in the slimy mud beneath it lay embedded the ruins of the ill-fated cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The glare of light was blinding to the eye, and the atmosphere difficult of respiration. No bird fanned with its wing the attenuated air, through which the sun poured his scorching rays upon the mysterious element on which we floated, and which alone, of all the works of its Maker, contains no living thing within it."*

Among the most interesting plants of this region are those which are considered to have furnished the description given by Josephus and other ancient writers, of the "Apples of Sodom." The Jewish historian, after having mentioned the destruction of the cities of the plain, and the traces of the burning vengeance that remained in his day, goes on to speak of their ashes being perpetuated in fruits, which have an appearance as if fit to be eaten, but which, on

* Jordan and the Dead Sea, p. 311.

being plucked, dissolve in the hand into smoke and ashes.*

Several plants indeed have been at different times supposed to be identical with those thus described; but the best claims are presented by the Mad apple (*Solanum melongena*) and the Osher (*Asclepias procera*). The former is a shrub from three to five feet in height, bearing round yellowish berries about an inch and a half in diameter. They are called *Leimún Lút* by the Arabs, who have a tradition that "the plant formerly bore excellent limes, but for the wickedness of the people of the plain, it was cursed by Lot, and doomed to bear the bitter fruit which it now yields." It is true they are not always filled with dust, but only when the fruit is attacked by an insect (a species of saw fly, *Tenthredo*), which turns the whole interior into dust, leaving the skin only entire, and of a beautiful colour.

The osher, however, seems better to coincide with the description of Josephus. Professor Robinson thus speaks of it: "One of the first objects which attracted our notice on arriving at 'Ain Jidy (Engedi) was a tree with singular fruit . . . the *'ösher* of the Arabs . . . which is found in abundance in Upper Egypt and Nubia, and also in Arabia Felix; but it seems to be confined in Palestine to the borders of the Dead Sea. We saw here [at 'Ain Jidy] several trees of the kind, the trunks of which were six or

* Bell. Jud. IV. viii. 4.

eight inches in diameter, and the whole height from ten to fifteen feet. It has a greyish cork-like bark, with long oval leaves, . . . and when its leaves and flowers are broken off, it discharges copiously a milky fluid. The fruit greatly resembles externally a large smooth apple or orange, hanging in clusters of three or four together, and when ripe is of a yellow colour.

APPLE OF SODOM.

It was now fair and delicious to the eye, and soft to the touch, but on being pressed or struck it explodes with a puff, like a bladder or puff-ball, leaving in the hand only the shreds of the thin rind, and a few fibres. It is, indeed, chiefly filled with air, like a bladder, which gives it the round form, while in the

centre a small slender pod runs through it from the stem, and is connected by thin filaments with the rind. The pod contains a small quantity of fine silk with seeds, precisely like the pod of the silk-weed, (*Asclepias Syriaca*), though very much smaller. The Arabs collect the silk, and twist it into matches for their guns, preferring it to the common match, because it requires no sulphur to render it combustible."

In the account of Josephus, the Professor goes on to observe, "There is nothing, after a due allowance for the marvellous in all popular reports, which does not apply almost literally to the fruit of the *'ösher* as we saw it. It must be plucked and handled with great care, in order to preserve it from bursting. We attempted to carry some of the boughs and fruit with us to Jerusalem, but without success."*

The geological character of this whole region is somewhat singular. Dr. Wilson considers the great *crevasse* which forms the valley of the Jordan, the Dead Sea, and the Wady Arabah, to have been produced by the upheaving of basalt, which appears in many places around the Lake of Tiberias, and which is seen here and there along the line nearly to the source of the Jordan at Hasbeya. In connection with this remarkable formation he notices the existence of thermal springs, particularly at the bituminous wells near Hasbeya, along the shores of the

* Bibl. Res. vol. ii. p. 235.

Lake of Tiberias, on the banks of the Jarmuk, and in the Wady Kerka Main; and also of layers, cakes, and masses of bitumen and salt, especially along the shores of the Dead Sea.

Such then are the physical characters of this ancient river; and we now proceed to glance at some of those incidents with which it has been associated, and which have conferred upon it an interest superior to that which attaches to any other stream (with one exception) on the face of the globe.*

Joshua III., IV.

THE children of Israel had wandered in the Arabian desert, "that great and terrible wilderness," through the dreary period of forty years; and now at length the time was come when they were to go-in to possess the good land which Jehovah had sworn to give them. Moses, their devoted leader, was dead; Aaron, the high-priest, was dead also; and of all the six hundred thousand fighting men that had come out of Egypt, there now remained not one, except Caleb and Joshua, the faithful spies who thirty-eight years before had given a good report of the land which they had then searched out. The mission of

* Some of the statements, and some of the inferences, in the preceding chapter, must be re-weighed in the light of more recent researches; as those of Messrs. de Saulcy, Van de Velde, and Tristram.

Moses, the mediator and lawgiver in the wilderness-wandering, was accomplished, and he had passed from the scene; and the command of the host now devolved upon Joshua, who, as the typical Captain of their salvation, was appointed to lead them into possession of the promised inheritance, to conquest, and to rest.

The thousands of Israel were encamped in the plains of Moab. In their front rolled the Jordan, like a sea; for the winter rains had fallen, and his full tide had overflowed his banks, and filled the whole breadth of the lower valley. Beyond the foaming tide was spread the fertile plain of Jericho, covered with its waving fields of corn, now fully ripe, and inviting the sickle; and in the midst of it, full in the sight of the host, embosomed in its gardens and groves of balsam-trees, and date-palms, and many other valued plants, rose the lofty walls of the fair "city of palm-trees," the stately Jericho. The level tract on which the Hebrew camp was pitched had not at this time its wonted barrenness; for the genial spring had covered its sands with verdure, and adorned it with a thousand flowers. Behind, girding in the plains of Shittim as with a rampart, stretched along the horizon the mountains of Abarim, casting their morning shadows even to the camp; and, conspicuous among them, the lofty Pisgah reared its rugged peak, whence, only a little while before, the beautiful sight of "Israel abiding in their tents" had evoked blessings instead of curses

from the unwilling mouth of the Mesopotamian prophet; and where, still more recently, the venerable lawgiver had been privileged with a prospect of the goodly land, and had then died in the arms of God.*

Joshua had sent out two spies to take a survey of the frontier city, and to report its condition to him. They had now returned, and had informed him of their adventures; of the terror which had struck deep into the failing hearts of the Canaanites on the approach of Israel; of the renown which the late interpositions of Divine power had procured for the name of Jehovah; of the faith of Rahab, the harlot who had afforded them concealment from the wrath of the king; of their solemn covenant to spare her life in the coming desolation; and of the scarlet line to be hung out of the window, the significant seal and token of that covenant of salvation. These and other things the spies had reported to their commander, to the confirmation of his faith, and the increase of his hope in God.

And now the glorious day was come when, by a stupendous miracle, Jehovah had determined to show how able He was to remove every obstacle in the way of His people, and to subdue every enemy before their face. By His appointment the host, amounting

* "So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, *according to the Word of the Lord.*" Deut. xxxiv. 5. In Hebrew, it is "*at the mouth of the Lord;*" which the Rabbins render, "*by the kiss of the Lord.*"

probably to two millions and a-half of persons (about the same number as had crossed the Red Sea on foot), had removed to the banks of the river three days before, and now in marching array awaited the signal to cross the stream. At any time the passage of the river by such a multitude, with their women and children, their flocks and herds, and all their baggage, would have presented formidable difficulties; but now the channel was filled with a deep and impetuous torrent, which overflowed its banks and spread widely on each side, probably extending nearly a mile in width; while in the very sight of the scene were the Canaanitish hosts, who might be expected to pour out from their gates, and exterminate the invading multitude before they could reach the shore. Yet these difficulties were nothing to Almighty power, and only served to heighten the effect of the stupendous miracle about to be wrought.

By the command of Jehovah, the priests, bearing the Ark of the Covenant, the sacred symbol of the Divine presence, marched more than half a mile in the front of the people, who were forbidden to come any nearer to it. Thus it was manifest that Jehovah needed not protection from Israel, but was their guard and guide, since the unarmed priests feared not to separate themselves from the host, and to venture with the Ark into the river in the face of their enemies. And thus the army, standing aloof, had a better opportunity of seeing the wondrous results, and of admiring the mighty power of God exerted

on their behalf; for no sooner had the feet of the priests touched the brim of the overflowing river, than the swelling waters receded from them; and not only the broad lower valley, but even the deep bed of the stream was presently emptied of water, and its pebbly bottom became dry. The waters which had been in the channel speedily ran off, and were lost in the Dead Sea; while those which would naturally have replaced them from above, were miraculously suspended, and accumulated in a glassy heap far above the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan. These places are supposed to have been at least forty miles above the Dead Sea, and may possibly have been much more; so that nearly the whole channel of the Lower Jordan, from a little below the Lake of Tiberias to the Dead Sea, was dry.*

The priests now removed from the brink to the middle of the river's bed, where they stood on dry

* Bethshean is described in 1 Kings iv. 12, as "by Zartanah beneath Jezreel;" and in chap. vii. 47, of the same book, we read that Solomon cast the brazen sea and the vessels of the temple, "in the plain of Jordan, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarthan." If Zaretan was, as can scarcely be doubted, the same as the Zartanah and Zarthan of these passages, we may infer its position with considerable accuracy; for the situation of Jezreel (Zer'in), of Bethshean (Beisân), and of Succoth (Sukhot), are ascertained, the former two with certainty, and the latter with high probability; and are placed in Professor Robinson's map at the following distances from the head of the Dead Sea:—Jezreel, 58; Bethshean, 53; and Succoth, 50 statute miles, measured in a straight line.

ground during the whole time that the immense host marched over. In this position, so trying both to their faith and patience, they remained all day, the Ark being with them, the symbol of Jehovah's presence and the token of His favour, thus standing between the impending mass of waters and the people. Thus in calmness and dignity, without hurry or dismay, but in perfect subjection and order, the multitude passed over Jordan, and took possession of the Land of Canaan. As soon as the passage of the host was accomplished, Joshua, under the direction of God, took measures for the perpetuation of the memory of this grand event. Twelve selected men, one of each tribe of Israel, were commanded to return into the midst of the channel, where the Ark yet stood, and to take thence twelve stones, probably as large as each man could carry. These, when brought upon the bank, were set up as a monument of the miracle in the place where the host lodged; while twelve similar stones were taken from the ground, and built up for a similar purpose in the midst of the river, where the Ark had stood. Then, and not till then, when all had been accomplished that Jehovah had commanded, without haste, the priests likewise ascended out of the channel, and carried the Ark of the Covenant into that country which was henceforth to be no longer the land of promise, but the land of inheritance. Instantly, as the soles of their feet left the channel, the waters began to flow as usual, and soon not only again filled

the bed of the river, but also flowed over all the banks as they did before.

What a glorious termination of the long pilgrimage of Israel was this! and how worthy of the power, wisdom, and goodness of their Divine Protector! "The passage of this deep and rapid river," remarks Dr. Hales, "at the most unfavourable season, was more manifestly miraculous, if possible, than that of the Red Sea; because here was no natural agency whatever employed; no mighty wind to sweep a passage, as in the former case; no reflux of the tide, on which minute philosophers might fasten to depreciate the miracle. It seems, therefore, to have been providentially designed to silence cavils respecting the former; and it was done at noon-day, in the face of the sun, and in the presence, we may be sure, of the neighbouring inhabitants, and struck terror into the kings of the Canaanites and Amorites westward of the river."

The wandering of the children of Israel through the dreary desert has always been considered to be typical of the believer's pilgrimage through "the wilderness of this world." And the crossing of Jordan may well represent the closing scene, when God "bringeth him to the king of terrors." But the terrors of the grisly king himself are disarmed by One who has gone before through the dark valley, even Jesus, who has been with His follower throughout His long wandering, has cared for him, supplied his need, given him bread from heaven and water out of

the rock, has borne with his waywardness, and pardoned his multiplied transgressions, and who now will not forget His gracious promises: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Death may indeed appear terrible in the prospect, and Satan may rage and threaten, and the Christian often fears that he shall be overwhelmed and lost in the dark and turbulent flood; yet the issue is secured by covenant love, and not one of the true Israel shall ever make shipwreck there. The triumph is certain to the feeblest and youngest, not less than to the strongest and most experienced; since it depends not on their wisdom or strength, but on the presence of their Almighty Lord. "For though they have none of them passed this way heretofore, yet Jesus, their Brother and Friend, hath gone before, and crossed the river, when its floods were swelled to a tremendous height; and by passing through He hath divided the floods before them; and He safely reached the heavenly shore, when He rose from the dead as the first fruits of His people, and ascended into heaven as their forerunner; and He began to be magnified in the sight of all Israel, when, thus risen and ascended, He sent down His Holy Spirit, to give assistance to His apostles and success to His preached gospel. Now, therefore, they may march through this dreaded river without danger or terror if they are but able to keep the eye of faith fixed

upon His person, His complete salvation, His word of promise, and the inheritance which He hath provided for them on the other side. The Lord will provide for our passage of this Jordan when the time comes; and we shall soon join the innumerable multitude, that in the Canaan above are singing the praises of their great Deliverer, who hath both redeemed them from Egyptian bondage, and brought them safe to the promised land, through His precious blood, and by His all-conquering arm."*

Matthew III.

IT seems to have been at the very same part of the river (Bethabara, "the house of the passage") that, fifteen centuries later, a great transaction took place, which mystically represented the same grand and glorious truth, the annulling of the power of death by the ever-blessed Surety. This was the scene of the baptism of the Lord Jesus; an event of high significance, recorded with much minuteness of detail by all the four evangelists; yet one whose import is altogether unheeded by most students of the Divine Word. Let us turn aside, and, with unshod feet, gaze on this great sight.

And first, the scene; the Jordan; a river absolutely unique in the whole world; cleft in the very bowels of the earth; being, at its issue from the Lake of Galilee,

* Scott, *in loc.*

far below the sea-level, and ever plunging lower and lower, by twenty-seven distinct descents, till it empties into the Dead Sea, that horrid yawning chasm of salt and pitch and desolation, whose surface is actually 1,300 feet below the Mediterranean, the awful grave of those cities "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). Throughout the Scripture this wondrous river stands as the type of *penal death*;* and may we not say, of death issuing in hell? Its very name is significant, whether we accept the etymology which reads "the descender," the downward-plunger, or that, which seems the better one, of "the River of Judgment." †

Secondly, the actors; both of whom are representative personages. John, the minister of an offended God, representing the majesty of Law; of law broken, and therefore demanding the punishment of the transgressors. Jesus, the Holy One of God, indeed, but the Surety and Substitute of sinners, "made sin for us" (2 Cor. v. 21).

Thirdly, the action. Baptism shadows death and burial; that is, penal death, and the putting of the executed out of the Judge's sight. John, for God, standing in the desert, aloof from Israel (Matt. xi. 18), calls on them to come and submit to baptism at his hands; *i.e.*, to confess that death and judgment

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* Gen. xiii. 10; Josh. iii., iv; 2 Kings ii. 8, 14; v.; vi. 1–7; Jer. xii. 5.

† יָאֹר (Jor) river, and דִּין (din) judgment.

are their due. The nation accepts this position, doubtless with little intelligence; but this national confession and submission to mystic death renders it possible for grace to come forth. Then Jesus comes; and though at first even John loses sight of His typical status in the deep consciousness of his personal inferiority, he is at once corrected by a word from Jesus: "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness;"—"US," *i.e.*, Me, as the Sin-bearer, by submitting to the penalty righteously denounced; Thee, as the majesty of Law, by righteously inflicting it.

And now the Sinless One, as made sin, is plunged out of sight beneath the mystic waters; but, lifted up out of them straightway,* a figure of resurrection, and that by Him who had inflicted the doom, three circumstances of the most transcendent import, result. Remember, that we have to do with not Jesus only, but the Christ; not the personal, individual Holy One, but the mystic Head, with His many members;† what He has just accomplished is for all believers it is *our* death, it is *our* resurrection. And the three glorious results are also shared with us. They are these: 1. an opened heaven (Eph. ii. 6; Heb. x. 19);

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* This is not said of the people, who were baptized before. As a matter of fact, of course, they *were* lifted out; but the silence of the Holy Ghost is sometimes as significant as His expressions. All that the narrative notices, is death; but no resurrection till Jesus is raised.

† This distinction gives the force to the Apostle's argument in Romans viii. 11.

2. the abiding of the Holy Spirit (John xiv. 16; Eph. i. 13, 14; iv. 30); 3. avowed Sonship to God, (Rom. viii. 14–17; Gal. iv. 5–7; Heb. ii. 10–13).

Thus, at the very opening of His ministry, in His very first public act, our adorable Lord presented a symbolic rehearsal of the great work for which He came into the world, and its blessed consequences.

SUPPOSED SCENE OF THE BAPTISM.

The identical spot on the Jordan's brink from which the Lord Jesus descended into the stream, and where He stood when the Spirit lighted on Him as a dove, has in all subsequent ages been a matter of much interest to ascertain. Two places are pointed out with equal confidence, and equal assumption of certainty: the one, about four miles from the shore

of the Dead Sea ; the other, about three miles higher up the stream. Both spots are scenes had in great reverence by the respective parties who advocate the genuineness of each ; and annual pilgrimages are made to both. The higher site is advocated by the Latins, the lower by the Greeks and Armenians. Both are described as presenting the most beautiful scenery that this river affords, the banks being fringed with tamarisks, willows, the beautiful oleanders in abundance, and many other shrubs in rich luxuriance.

Each party considers its own spot as identical also with the scene of Israel's crossing the Jordan to take possession of the land ; and we have inferred already, from the mention of Bethabara, that there was a village or monument whose name commemorated that passage at the place where He was baptizing. But we can hardly suppose the scene of the one incident to be as limited as that of the other. Two millions and a-half of people, in crossing the dry bed of the river, would doubtless spread themselves over a space of considerable extent ; especially as they had the whole length of the river, at least for forty miles, turned into dry land for them : so that it may not be extravagant to suppose that, while the priests with the Ark may have stood at the upper or Latin site of the Baptism, the extended front of the host (none of whom were to approach within three-quarters of a mile of the Ark), may have reached three miles lower down, to the locality preferred by the Greeks.

The annual pilgrimage to the latter spot has been described by Mr. Elliot, who was present in 1837. About 5,000 persons from all parts of the East were assembled, of whom 3,000 were pilgrims. Dressed in every variety of costume, some mounted on various beasts of burden, some on foot, horse- and foot-soldiers in gay uniforms, men, women, and children—the assemblage presents a motley appearance, as curious as it is picturesque.

The approach of the cavalcade to the river, after having spent the last night in the neighbourhood of Jericho, by the stream which is supposed to be the fountain healed by Elisha, is thus graphically described :—

"A little after midnight the pilgrims put themselves in motion, in order to reach by sun-rise the banks of the sacred river ; but it is no easy matter to start a caravan of 5,000 persons, and it was three o'clock, A.M., before the cavalcade was in progress. A number of torch-bearers preceded, carrying flambeaux, which threw a wild blaze of light over the plain and the moving host. The Arab cavalry marched next, their spirited horses curvetting, while they plunged into the high grass and jungle, to drive out any lurking Bedouins. The governor, with the Greek archbishop, followed ; and, lastly, the whole host of pilgrims, hurrying along with anxious expectation to wash in a stream which they vainly suppose to be endowed with a cleansing moral efficacy. In such a multitude, moving without order, subject to no

discipline, and wrought up to an unnatural pitch of excitement by superstitious zeal, it is not surprising that many accidents occur. Some of the party are generally left dead, many are wounded, and all are kept in a feverish state of alarm for their personal safety. One thing struck us forcibly; the entire absence of sympathy among these professors of piety. If an aged man, a feeble woman, or helpless child fell from his seat, no friendly hand was stretched out to aid, and no fellow pilgrim halted to ascertain the extent of injury received. The groans and cries of the sufferer were responded to by a laugh, and the cavalcade moved on, regardless of their brother, who, if he met with sympathy and aid, found it at the hand of some good Samaritan united to him by no ties of country or of faith.

"The sun rose above the mountains of Moab just as we reached the Jordan, after a ride of more than two hours over a tract utterly sterile, deserted even by the samphire and low shrubs which appear on other parts of the plain. Instantly a rush was made, and the pilgrims, young and old, rich and poor, sick and sound, men, women, and children, plunged into the stream. Some of the females and children, however, evinced a degree of nervousness: and here and there the father of a family might be seen gently chiding his spouse, or more roughly handling his young sons; now religiously forcing the head of a little girl under the water, and now struggling with a well-grown urchin whose fears had got the better of

his love of pilgrimage. Of the men, some jumped boldly in, communicating a rotatory motion to the body as it passed through the air; a few considerately occupied themselves in aiding the weaker sex, rendering to a tottering mother or timid sister the support of filial or fraternal strength. Others resigned themselves composedly to the priests, who, standing . . . in the river, poured the sacred water three times on the head of the devotee. All were clad in winding-sheets, or, to speak more correctly, all carried with them, either attached in some way to the body, or held loosely in the hand, the piece of cloth with which they wish to be enveloped after death, which . . . is supposed to protect from the power of the devil both the corpse so shrouded and the spirit that shall re-animate it. Some of these promiscuous bathings are occasions of great indecorum, but in the present instance, we saw no more than the *ghât* of every populous town on the Ganges exhibits daily. When, however, the scene is contemplated as a religious ceremony, and when the Turkish governor is observed, with his Moslem satellites, ridiculing with proud disdain these vain ablutions, and this violation of female modesty, the Protestant cannot but lament the errors of those who like himself profess the faith of Christ, and the consequent degradation of that sacred name in the eyes of infidels." *

* Three Empires, vol. i. p. 76.

Judges III., VII., XII.

WE find several allusions in Scripture to the Fords of Jordan. We must not imagine that the existence of such crossing-places precluded the necessity of the stupendous miracle which enabled the whole host of Israel to "go through the flood on foot;" for, at the most favourable time, the shallow parts of the stream are but limited in extent; and, though practicable for mounted persons, or adults on foot, would have presented insuperable obstacles to little children, to the young and sickly of the flocks, in which a large part of the Hebrew substance consisted, and to the cumbrous baggage of a migrating people. Besides, as we have already intimated, it was about the time of the vernal equinox, when, through the swelling floods, the river could probably at no point have been forded.

Several of the fords have been described by modern travellers, who have crossed the river at the respective points which they notice. Some of these occur in the higher part of the stream, soon after its emergence from the Lake of Gennesaret. In the beginning of February, Mr. Buckingham found it barely fordable about three miles below the lake; and there is another ford a mile lower which is shallower. In this, however, the water near each bank is deep enough for a horse to swim, but the middle is quite shoal. These have on one side the

ancient Galilee, just at the foot of Mount Tabor, and on the other the country of the Gadarenes or of the Gergesenes, both of them familiar scenes in the history of our Blessed Lord.

Twenty miles below the lake there are several fords, not far from each other; and the Jordan is much crossed in this neighbourhood, as it was of old.

MOUNT TABOR.

The most noted places in the vicinity were Beth-shan, on the west side, to the wall of which the Philistines fastened the bodies of Saul and his sons, after the fatal battle of Gilboa; and, on the east side, Jabesh-Gilead, the valiant inhabitants of which rescued the mutilated corpses from their degrading

exposure, and buried them in their own city. A little below Bei-san (Bethshan), Captain Mangles found the water in March to reach the belly of a horse; and, lower still, Burckhardt found it to have nearly the same depth in the midst of summer.

About twenty miles above the Dead Sea, Captains Irby and Mangles again forded the river, near the end of March; but it was with great difficulty, for the waters were much swollen. They thus describe the stream at this point:—"The plain, from the foot of the mountains, is about half-way pretty level, but barren; thence it becomes rugged, consisting of a quantity of hills, vales, and deep chasms, in a dry soil of very white appearance, and of a saltish nature: this continues to within a quarter of a mile of the river's bank, whence the rest is a rich flat plain to the margin of the river, which is in the bottom of a deep ravine, beautifully wooded, and so overgrown, that the stream is not seen till you are close to it."

At a point four miles lower still, Mr. Buckingham found the Jordan easily forded by horses; but this was in January, when the water was low. The difference between the upper and lower levels of the valley was very conspicuous. The latter was a mile wide in some parts, and in others not more than a furlong, and was bounded by chalky cliffs two hundred feet in height. The actual banks of the stream were fourteen or fifteen feet high; and, as there were indications that these were sometimes overflowed, we may gain a notion of the great increase of

the stream produced by the spring floods. The water was found by this traveller to be well-tasted, and, though rapid, tolerably clear, because flowing over a pebbly bottom.

A vengeance, severe and terrible, was often taken by Israel at these places upon the surrounding nations, whom the Lord from time to time raised up against them, on account of their apostasy, and who cruelly tyrannized over them. The Rabbins say that the best generation of Israel that ever lived was that which entered into Canaan, and was contemporaneous with the remaining years of Joshua's life. But very soon after the death of that able and pious commander, the Hebrew people began to forget Jehovah and the wonders which He had wrought for them, and to serve the gods of the nations who had been cast out before them. Then He sold them into the hands of their enemies, to bring them to repentance; but when they cried unto Him, He heard, and raised up from time to time some mighty man of valour to be a deliverer and a judge in Israel.

One of the earliest of these captivities,—of which there were many, but some of which were perhaps contemporaneous with others, each being only partial in its extent,—was that under Eglon, the king of Moab. That prince had formed an alliance with Ammon and Amalek, and had taken "the city of palm-trees," where, with no greater a force than ten thousand Moabites, he had established himself, and held Israel in subjection for eighteen years. At

length Ehud, a left-handed Benjamite, executed Jehovah's vengeance upon the tyrant; and, before the deed was known, the blast of his trumpet in Mount Ephraim aroused the men of Israel, who gladly responded to his call. The first object was to secure the fords of the Jordan; for thus, not only were the ten thousand Moabites shut up to their vengeance, and prevented from escape, but the possibility of any help being afforded them by their countrymen was precluded. The fords were taken; not a man was suffered to pass over; Israel "slew of Moab at that time ten thousand men; all lusty, and all men of valour; *and there escaped not a man.* . . . And the land had rest forty years."

The region which was possessed by the Moabites lay chiefly near the head of the Dead Sea, and extended only a short distance up the left bank of the Jordan. The fords therefore which were taken by Ehud must have been those which connected the plains of Shittim with the plains of Jericho; and the very locality, recalling, as it surely would, glorious memories of the past, while it would nerve the arm of Israel to exterminate the foe, would doubtless excite feelings of humble self-abasement for their apostasy, and kindle fresh love and confidence towards Jehovah.

It was at the very same part of the river that the consummation of that glorious victory was effected, which was ages afterwards spoken of as "the day of Midian." For Beth-barah, "the house of the pas-

sage," is named as one of the points (probably the southernmost) at which the waters were taken; but the vigilance of the Ephraimites doubtless extended up the stream, guarding all the fords at least as high as those which we have just described after Irby and Mangles, and Buckingham. The Midianites were pitched in the valley of Jezreel; and, after the panic, some of them fled northward to Beth-shittah, which lay at the foot of Mount Tabor.

The repeated apostasies of Israel, untaught by repeated punishments and deliverances, had provoked Jehovah to let loose upon their land the pastoral nomadic tribes that roved beyond Jordan, the Midianites and Amalekites, and "the children of the East." They came swarming like locusts, spreading over the entire country, devouring the whole produce of the fields and pastures, till "no sustenance was left for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass;" and the unhappy owners of the land were compelled to hide themselves in mountains, and caves, and strongholds.

At length, in answer to the cry of His people, the Lord commissioned Gideon, a man of Manasseh, to deliver them. A small army was gathered of four-and-twenty thousand men; but Jehovah had determined to prove that the strength of Israel lay not in sword or spear; "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah." The timid were permitted to go home; and the depressed state of the people at this time is strongly shown by the fact,

that of the little army of 24,000 men, 22,000 were glad to avail themselves of the permission to retire when they came in sight of the enemy. The Midianitish host might indeed well appal them, for they "lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude, and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea-side for multitude."

But the 2,000 that remained with Gideon are far too large a number still: there must be no room for boasting; Jehovah will have the exclusive honour of the victory. By a singular test the number is reduced to 300 men, and by this little band the innumerable host shall be discomfited. Jehovah himself appoints the manner of proceeding. In the middle of the night, the 300 Israelites, divided into three companies, take up their positions on three sides of the enemy: each man carries a trumpet, an earthen pitcher, and a lamp within it. At a given signal, each sounds a long blast with the trumpet; the Midianites start up from sleep affrighted, and gaze around; in the same instant, every man breaks his pitcher, and out gleams the blaze of three hundred lamps, while on every hand rises the appalling shout, "The sword of Jehovah and of Gideon!" The trumpet-blast, the crash of the pitchers, the sudden flash of light, and the shouting, all at once acting on the senses of men half-awakened, and heightened by the previous silence and gloom, produced a panic: all the host ran, and cried, and fled.

The news of the discomfiture soon spread; and

the men of Israel were sufficiently ready to pursue the flying foe: the Ephraimites took the fords, but not until two of the kings, with a portion of the army, had got over. There, however, Gideon and his three hundred followed; "faint, yet pursuing;" and, notwithstanding the churlish lack of patriotism in Penuel and Succoth, found the Midianitish kings with the remnant of their mighty host. Though still utterly disproportioned in numbers, faint with hunger and weary with pursuit, the three hundred, trusting in the God of Israel, fell on the fifteen thousand, and discomfited them, taking prisoners the two chieftains. Thus, in this wonderful deliverance, there fell of the enemies of Israel, "120,000 men that drew sword."

The experience which Israel had of the irresistible power of Jehovah, and the proofs which He was continually giving them of His willingness to exert His omnipotence on their behalf, ought to have kept them faithful to Himself. But it did not; "for their heart was not right with Him, neither were they stedfast in His covenant: but He being full of compassion forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned He His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath." And in this how like are we to Israel! How often do we grieve the Blessed Spirit, and turn away from Him who has wrought so great a salvation for us! We provoke the Lord to chastise us sorely, and give, by our sins, a great advantage to our enemies. Yet, He does not give us up "as a prey to their teeth;" and though

we are feeble, and our spiritual adversaries are numerous and mighty, they shall be surely overcome; and the weakest believer may take up the song of faith, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

A third example of this military practice we may allude to in the conflict that resulted upon the triumph of Jephthah the Gileadite. But here the Ephraimites were the sufferers, not the gainers by the expedient. The Gileadite chief had returned from the rout and slaughter of the Ammonites, and had reaped the bitter fruit of his rash and foolish * vow. The fiery Ephraimites, as they had already done in the case of Gideon, haughtily remonstrated with Jephthah, because the triumph had been achieved without them, though their aid had been vainly sought before. Their insulting language brought on a conflict, in which, notwithstanding their power and prowess, the men of Ephraim were worsted. The battle was fought on the east side of the Jordan, and when the fugitives endeavoured to escape over the river to their own land, they found themselves forestalled at the fords, which were already in the possession of the victorious Gileadites.

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* Perhaps it *was* "rash and foolish," as I have said above, in consonance with general opinion; but Jephthah's name is in that goodly array of worthies, in Heb. xi., who "obtained the good report" of the Holy Ghost; and he is certainly a type of that Righteous One, who "swore to His own hurt, and changed not" (Ps. xv. 4).—*Edition* 1877.

The test by which the Ephraimite was detected was very curious. One would have thought that there could be no sensible difference between the men of one tribe and those of another; and that, if an Ephraimite had chosen to say that he was a Manassite, or even a Gileadite, there would have been no means of convicting him of falsehood. But a slight, yet perfectly appreciable, difference in the pronunciation of a letter was found to be a certain criterion. The Ephraimites, it seems, could not produce the sound of שׁ (sh), but substituted for it that of שׂ (s); the demand "Say now Shibboleth" (that is, a stream), at once determined the question: if his organs could only say "Sibboleth," it was enough; he was convicted out of his own mouth, and slain. Thus forty-two thousand Ephraimites fell on that occasion, the great majority of whom may be said to have fallen victims to their vicious pronunciation. Yet it would be more true to say that they owed their death to their overweening pride, envy, ambition, their quarrelsome tempers, and their unbridled tongues. How many of the strifes among brethren, as well as of the wars among nations, might be traced to similar causes! May the Lord lead us less to insist on the Shibboleths of party, and more to seek after "the things that make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another!"

2 Kings II.

GLORIOUS had been the manifestation of divine power, when the affrighted waters of Jordan were driven back before the host of Israel; but far more glorious was that display of it, which terminated the earthly career of the prophet Elijah. He had been the faithful witness for God in times of deep degeneracy in Israel, when the open worship of Baal had supplanted, almost entirely, the acknowledgment of Jehovah; and the godly of the seed of Jacob, an exceedingly small remnant, had been persecuted and compelled to hide in glens and caves by the weak and wicked Ahab, stirred up by his still more infamous wife, Jezebel. As an illustration of the daring impiety of the times, we are told that, in the days of Ahab, Hiel the Bethelite ventured, in spite of the solemn curse denounced by Joshua,* to rebuild the city Jericho; and though, according to the prophecy, his firstborn was cut off when he laid the foundation, he scorned to swerve from his bold purpose, until the death of his youngest son, as he set up the gates, fulfilled the terms of the prediction, and left him an accursed and a childless man.

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* "And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before Jehovah, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it."—*Josh.* vi. 26.

Immediately after the record of this solemn incident, the Holy Spirit abruptly introduces Elijah the Tishbite, denouncing the judgment of Jehovah against His apostate inheritance. Like One of whom he was an illustrious type, he was the faithful testifier against evil, and the solitary witness for God; like that Blessed One, he proved that godly testimony evokes the rancour of the world, which rejected Him and cast Him out. And, like his antitype, he was cheered and comforted by communion with his Father in heaven, tended by the willing service of ministering angels, and, when his suffering course was done, and his mission accomplished, received up into the celestial glory.

It is this last wondrous scene that we will now contemplate, the glorious rapture of the prophet from the banks of Jordan to heaven. His Lord has given him an intimation of the manner of his departure, so far beyond his desires or expectations. Formerly, in a moment of despondency, he prayed, "O Lord, take away my life!" but death is to have no power against him, not even against his corruptible body. And now he knows that the moment draws near; and he proceeds, in company with his disciple and successor, Elisha, from Gilgal to Bethel, from Bethel to Jericho, from Jericho to Jordan. These were all scenes that had been associated, in Israel's early days, with glorious interpositions of God. Bethel, "the house of God and the gate of heaven," had been the place where the lonely and

benighted Jacob had seen the mystic ladder, reaching from earth to heaven, with the angels ascending and descending on it. Jordan had cleft his foaming tide, and "stood upon an heap," to allow the host to pass over. At Gilgal, the reproach of Egypt had been rolled away,* and Israel first ate the fruits of the land of Canaan. And Jericho, the strong and fortified city, had yielded to the conquering host their first victory in the land, her mighty walls falling prostrate before the trumpet-blasts of Jehovah's white-robed priests. But all these hallowed memories had been well-nigh effaced, and the scenes themselves polluted, by the debasing idolatry that had spread far and wide. A farewell word of exhortation, counsel, and comfort, to the few faithful ones that yet remain, Elijah journeys around to give; and then, as one who has done with earth's associations, whether painful or pleasing, he leaves them, in turn, all behind him, and keeps his eye on his heavenly rest.

It is not from the land of Israel that Elijah must ascend to heaven, but from the wilderness. "Israel had journeyed from Jordan to Jericho; but Elijah journeyed from Jericho to Jordan. In other words, as Jordan was that which separated the wilderness from the land, the prophet crossed it, thus leaving

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* The expression "they went *down* to Bethel" from Gilgal, militates, however, against this identification; for Bethel is 1000 feet above the plain of Jericho. Robinson finds ancient ruins, a few miles north of the site of Bethel, which yet bear the name of Jiljuleh.

Canaan behind him. His chariot met him, *not in the land, but in the wilderness.* The land was polluted, and was speedily to be cleansed of those who had introduced the pollution; the glory was soon to take its departure even from the most favoured spot; Ichabod might be written upon it all: wherefore the prophet leaves it, and passes into the wilderness, thus pointing out to the spiritual mind, that nothing remained for heavenly men but the wilderness and the rest above. Earth was no longer to be the resting-place or portion of the man of God: it was polluted. The Jordan had been divided to allow Israel to pass from the wilderness to Canaan; it was now to be divided to allow a heavenly man to pass from Canaan to the wilderness, where his chariot awaited him, ready to convey him from earth to heaven." *

As the rod of Moses, stretched out over the Red Sea, had been the instrument of its division, so now the mantle of Elijah, wrapped together, is endowed with the same wonder-working energy. It smites the waters of the Jordan, and instantly they are divided hither and thither, and the sainted associates pass over on dry ground.

Nothing now intervenes; the last barrier of earth is left behind, and the chariot may every moment be expected. Elisha is encouraged to prefer his last request, before his honoured master be taken from him; and he asks "a double portion of Elijah's spirit." This was a large request, but it was the

* Life and Times of Elijah (Bryant, Bath), p. 108.

desire of faith, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. Long ago, he had been called to the prophetic office by Elijah's casting his mantle on him as he passed by; but then there had been, perhaps, a struggle with earthly affection in his heart,—"Let me kiss my father and my mother!" Now, however, the prophetic mantle is uppermost in his mind; he "covets earnestly the best gifts." Nor shall his holy aspiration be frustrated: a great thing, and difficult, indeed, it is,—"a *double* portion of the spirit" of Elijah! nevertheless, provided he is able to witness the glorious rapture, it shall be done.

And now their converse ends; for a chariot of fire and horses of fire are seen rushing down from the sky with winged speed, attended by hosts of ministering angels. In a moment, the "one is taken and the other left," and Elijah is carried up by a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha gazes after his beloved master, as he swiftly travels up the empyrean vault; and though he had hitherto calmly contemplated his own and Israel's bereavement, the sudden consciousness of the loss breaks forth in strong grief, and he exclaims,—"My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!"—for *he* was now taken away, whose prayers, and faith, and intercession had been a better defence for Israel than hosts of armed warriors.

The mantle is dropped, for it belongs to earth, not to heaven. It had been, and still is, the symbol of power; but it is power in earthly service. Hence-

forth, it belongs to Elisha,—the sign and seal of that double portion of the Spirit which he had so earnestly coveted.

Thus passed gloriously away into the regions of light and joy one who, with all his power, had been "a man subject to like passions as we are." And thus he became an earnest of those saints who shall be found alive at the coming of the Lord. We are told that some shall thus remain; that "we shall not all sleep;" and though it is common to speak of death as the universal lot, as the only certain event, this is not according to truth; for, whether the second advent of the Lord Jesus be at the very doors, or whether it be deferred for a while longer, the word is clear and explicit, that some shall be, like Elijah, triumphantly rapt away without dying, to meet the Lord in the air. Not that with mortal corruptible bodies we can enter into the heavenly glory; though we shall not all sleep, we shall all be changed;—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the great change will take place: this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. Jesus, Himself, shall change our vile body, that it be fashioned like unto His own glorious body; and so we shall be entirely like, as well as for ever with, the Lord. Doubtless it was so with Elijah; without a pang, without a struggle, all that was earthly, corruptible, and mortal, passed away from his body in the moment of his transition, just as his well-worn mantle dropped lightly to the earth.

O what a triumph of grace and power will then be manifested! The goodly company of living ones of whom the monster Death will be robbed, shall not ascend alone. Millions upon millions of those upon whom his insatiable jaws have closed, will at the same blessed moment be snatched out of his grasp, and endowed with new resurrection bodies incapable of dying any more; and all together, a multitude that no man can number, arrayed in unearthly light and dazzling glory, shall ascend up to the mansions of bliss above, to dwell for ever with Jesus. O reader! see to it that you have a well-grounded, scriptural hope of being one in that happy ascending throng! for it will include all who, whether alive or dead, are in Christ; and those who are left behind upon the earth, whether in the grave, or in the busy scenes of life, will be reserved for judgment and tribulation.

"The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

2 Kings v.

How little does man's happiness or wretchedness depend on the possession or deprivation of those gifts—wealth, honour, fame, professional success, high rank, or what not,—which mankind in general so much covet! How often there is a cankerworm at the root of the fairest plant of worldly prosperity,

blighting all its beauty, and turning its fruit to bitterness and ashes!

In the service of Benhadad, the king of Syria, there is one whom all look on with envy as a prosperous and fortunate man. He is the chief-captain of the Syrian armies, wielding the highest military power in the kingdom; he is eminent for valour, and his name is the theme of the national songs and praises; he is the darling of the people, and in the highest favour at the court of the king, for he has recently returned from a threatening war which he has brought to a conclusion most favourable for Syria, and he has carried his conquering arms into the territories of the surrounding nations. He is loved as well as honoured; he is surrounded by a family circle who regard him with personal affection as sincere as it is agreeable. His very servants feel his welfare and interests to be theirs; but—*he is a leper!* All his greatness and honour and power is embittered by the constant presence of a loathsome, painful, incurable disease—incurable by any hand less than God's.

In his household there is a little maid, a slave. She had been made captive in one of the late Syrian raids upon the land of Israel, and dragged away from her peaceful and happy home to bondage in a foreign land. Hard seems her lot, yet she is happy, and has pity to spare for her leprous lord.

The secret of the little maid's happiness is, that she knows the God of Israel; and in the largeness of her heart she utters the ardent wish, that her master

were with Jehovah's servant, the prophet Elisha, "for he would recover him of his leprosy." Probably, she had never heard of a leper's actually having been cured by Elisha, but it is the language of faith, setting no limits to Jehovah's power, or to Jehovah's mercy. What a sweet testimony in that idolatrous land!

The remarkable words of the Hebrew maid are soon reported to Naaman, and with the concurrence of the king, his master, he undertakes the journey into Samaria. He comes in the pride of his wealth and power, with large presents in his hand, ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment, and presents himself in lordly state at the door of Elisha. Full of his own greatness, he expects that the prophet will come out and personally perform a cure, which he thinks himself so well able to pay for. How then is he mortified when a servant is sent out to him with a simple verbal message to go and wash in Jordan! And what is Jordan? "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean?" Thus, in his pride and wrath, the haughty leper turns away, refusing to accept a blessing that costs so little, and that puts so little honour on the receiver!

It was well for Naaman that he had faithful and prudent servants, who, without in the least degree trenching upon the respect due from them to him, were yet able and willing affectionately to remon-

strate with him, and to show him the unreasonableness of his conduct. If some severe penance, some arduous labour, some long course of self-denial, some heavy price had been prescribed, would he not gladly have performed the conditions for the sake of the result? How much more, then, when the command was, simply, "Wash, and be clean"?

Convinced of his folly by this prudent appeal, the Syrian captain turns his horses' heads towards the Jordan, and soon he perceives its stream in the distance gliding through the plain like a thread of silver, here and there hidden by the overhanging bushes, and again emerging in its beauty, reflecting the light of heaven. He alights on the rushy brink, and according to the word of the prophet, dips himself in its waters. Six times he has immersed his body, but no change is perceptible; one plunge more completes the prescribed number: will it be successful, or only a mockery? His heart throbs with anxiety, as once more his white and scaly flesh is buried in Jordan's tide; but oh! how quickly does he leap out! for he feels the tide of health thrill through his veins in all its delicious novelty; and he needs not the cry of joy that escapes from his delighted attendants to assure him of what he has already felt, that his flesh has acquired the firmness and plumpness, and ruddy healthful hue, of the flesh of a little child. He humbly, and meekly, and gratefully returns to the house of Elisha, and as he stands before his benefactor, he witnesses a good confession;

"Behold! now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel. . . . Thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto Jehovah."

A beautiful illustration is thus presented to us of the simplicity and the freeness of gospel grace. Man in his pride and self-sufficiency would often be willing to "do some great thing" for the cure of his soul's leprosy; to have recourse to other ways of salvation, than that of simply washing in the "Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness." And many cannot consent to be saved for nothing, as mere beggars, who would be willing to carry a price in their hand. But salvation is of grace; it is not to be bought; not with penitence, nor with tears, nor with prayers, nor with penances, nor with promises of reformation, nor with alms, nor with good works of any kind. It is offered without money, and without price.

To some the apparent inadequacy of the remedy is an insuperable objection. They cannot imagine how the believing on the Lord Jesus Christ can avail to save their souls; and they are ready to turn away to some Abana or Pharpar of their own. But in this God is honoured, that the channel of salvation cuts off all boasting from man. It is enough that God, the Judge, has ordained the remedy, and that He perceives its perfect suitability to the end required.

But he, who, like Naaman, has been brought to try the Divine remedy, has proved its perfect efficacy.

He has found that the cleansing fountain of Jesus' blood has done more than merely purge away his sins. Naaman was not *merely* cleansed, nor put into the condition of another man, but made "as a little child," a new-born life, so to speak, was given him. And so with the poor sinner brought to the blood of Christ. He gets more than cleansing, he receives a new life imparted to him, and that is *life in resurrection*, for he is made a partaker of the life of his risen Lord. A believer is not an old creature amended, but a *new creature* in Christ Jesus.

2 Kings VI.

THE story which we are about to relate is one of those little incidents which touchingly show forth the tenderness of the Spirit of God. Nothing with Omnipotence is great; nothing with Love is little. The falling of a sparrow does not take place without God's ordaining, and the very hairs on the head of one of His saints are all numbered. The sympathies of God are ever exercised towards His people, and there is no occasion of sorrow to them, however trivial, or even contemptible it may seem in the eyes of the world, for which He does not care.

Elisha is again brought before us as the exerciser of Almighty power. Not as Elijah, in stern testimony against evil, the witness and intercessor against apostate Israel, but the agent of Omnipotence in gracious service to man, alleviating the sorrows and

supplying the need of the evil and the good. Thus he, too, was a beautiful type of the Lord Jesus, but in a very different aspect from Elijah.

Through the godly preaching and care of both of these devoted men, the Lord had already raised up a number of young persons, who were happy, though in times when true religion was in very bad savour, to give up all their prospects and worldly consideration for the service of Jehovah. They lived together in harmony and love, constituting what have been called "schools" or "colleges" of the sons of the prophets, several of which seem to have been established in the towns of Israel. Their poverty in the things of the present life is touchingly presented to us by the circumstances of the following incident.

Finding the dwelling where they resided too small for their increasing numbers, the young men propose to seek one of larger dimensions, but they have no means of attaining their desires, except by the labour of their own hands. They therefore say to Elisha, their spiritual guide and father, "Let us go, we pray thee, to Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell." In our early days we often wondered why they should go so far as to the banks of the Jordan for this purpose; but the researches of modern travellers have shown a sufficient reason in the great scarcity of timber-trees in Palestine, except on the summits and sides of the higher mountains, and the banks of the permanent rivers. The margins of Jordan, in parti-

cular, are fringed with acacia and tamarisk-trees, growing up abundantly from amidst the thickets of shrubs that conceal the river's brim. Both of these trees afford timber fit for building purposes; but the latter was in all probability chiefly used from its greater abundance, as well as the superior excellence of its wood.

The Oriental Tamarisk (*Tamarix orientalis*,) is an elegant and beautiful tree, which grows to the height of twenty or thirty feet. Its branches shoot upward at an acute angle with the direction of the trunk, and hence this tree has somewhat of the graceful slenderness of the Lombardy poplar. Its leaves are smooth and glossy, and resemble scales set on straight rod-like branches; the wood is hard, and, besides its value as timber, makes excellent charcoal. It produces galls, which are scarcely less valuable in the arts than those of the oak.

The kind and gracious Elisha is well content to accompany the humble band at their request, to solace their toil by his godly conversation, or to give them the benefit of his experience in prudent counsel. They come to the wooded bank of Jordan, and are quickly engaged in felling the straightest and tallest trees for the beams of their new dwelling. Probably their strength and industry were greater than their skill in the use of their tools; for, presently, as one of them was felling a tree that grew over the very water's brink, the head of the axe came off, and fell into the river. It seems a little circumstance, but it distressed the young man's mind, for he knew not how to replace

it ; and *it was borrowed.* Elisha's sympathies are at once excited : he does not coldly say, " It is a trifle, never mind it." The tenderness of conscience that grieved over the loss of another's property was pleasing to the Spirit of God, and He immediately impels the prophet to work a miracle for its recovery. Elisha cut down a stick, and cast it into the stream at the place where the iron axe-head had sunk, and immediately it rose to the surface and swam. And the young man put out his hand, and took it.

It is not usually that we find the omnipotence of God exerted miraculously about such things as these. But perhaps this was permitted, as we have hinted above, to represent to those immediately concerned, and to us, in future ages, the condescending grace wherewith He can meet every need. Of course, the display of power is as truly seen in the floating of the iron, as in the walking of Peter on the waves of the sea. " Both are equally contrary to nature. Neither is there any natural alliance between the cause and the effect—between the casting in of a stick, and the swimming of the iron, as there was none afterwards between the putting clay on the eyes, and the restoring of sight ; for it is neither the skill of the workman, nor the fitness of the instrument, that is to be considered, but the excellency of the power of God." *

* " Meditations on Elisha " (Lond., 1848), p. 49. Probably in each case there is a hidden meaning discernible only by the " scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven." The Holy

Matthew XVI.

THE sources of the Jordan require a brief notice, as two of them, at least, are connected with the historical records of Holy Scripture. The issuing of the large fountain from the mouth of the dark cavern at Paneas we have already described. Here Herod the Great built a temple of white marble, in honour of Augustus; and his son, Philip, the tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis, built a city around it, in the appellation of which he united the name of his imperial patron with his own, calling it Cæsarea Philippi.

It was to the neighbourhood of this city that our blessed Lord resorted with His disciples, after He had miraculously fed the multitude the second time. He probably sought retirement and privacy among the wild scenery with which this elevated region abounds. It was here that His inquiries, as to the notions which His disciples had formed of His person and character, elicited from Simon Peter that noble confession, revealed to Him, not by flesh and blood, but by His Father in heaven,—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." A glorious declaration was this!

Ghost is not limited to the rules of human composition. The story of the swimming iron suggests the following thoughts. A house is to be builded of materials gathered out of death and judgment (Jordan). God for salvation (Elisha) is with the labourers. The Power becomes subject to death. God raises Him; and the house is builded.

and blessed was he that uttered it! Ignorant of much important truth he yet was; many carnal expectations, and worldly, selfish desires were in his heart; little sympathy had he, as yet, with the purpose for which his Master had come into the world; he had yet to be greatly humbled, and to learn the treachery and depravity, as yet unsuspected, of his own heart; nay, his earthliness was about to evoke, almost the next instant, a stern rebuke, as the very mouth-piece of Satan, from Jesus. And yet Peter was a blessed man; for he had been divinely taught to recognize Him whom the Father had sanctified and sent into the world; and "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

A curious tradition is preserved by Eusebius connecting this city with the woman of faith, who was cured of her inveterate disease by touching the border of Jesus's garment. The words of the early historian are these:—"But, as we have mentioned this city, I do not think it right to pass by a narrative that deserves to be recorded for posterity. They say, that the woman who had an issue of blood, mentioned by the evangelists, and who obtained deliverance from her affliction by our Saviour, was a native of this place, and that her house is shown in the city, and the wonderful monuments of our Saviour's benefit to her are still remaining. At the gates of her house, on an elevated stone, stands a brazen image of a woman on her bended knee, with her hands stretched out before her, like one intreating. Opposite to this, there is

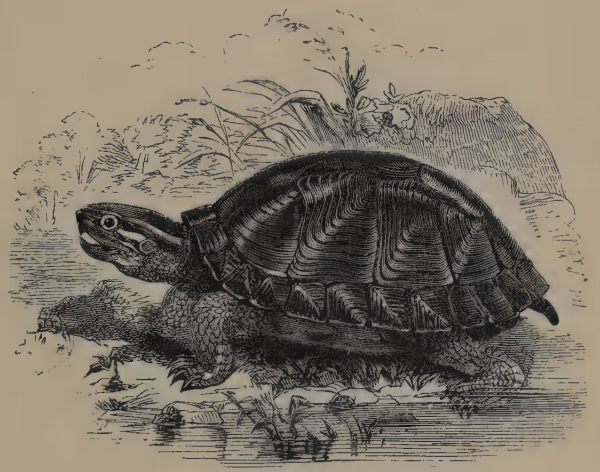
another image of a man erect, of the same materials, decently clad in a mantle, and stretching out his hand to the woman. Before her feet, and on the same pedestal, there is a certain strange plant growing, which, rising as high as the hem of the brazen garment, is a kind of antidote to all kinds of diseases. This figure, they say, is a statue of Jesus Christ, and it has remained even until our times, so that we ourselves saw it whilst tarrying in that city."* Other ancient writers have repeated this story, and some add that the woman was named Berenice. The monument was destroyed either by Julian, or, according to others, by Maximin.

Judges XVIII. 1 Kings XII.

AT the fountains of the Jordan, which rise at Tel-el-Kady, stood one of the ancient seats of Israelitish idolatry. The city of Laish, or Lasha, was of great antiquity; for it is mentioned as one of the border cities of Canaan long before the time of Abraham. It belonged to Sidon, but was too far removed from that powerful maritime city to enjoy the benefit of protection from it; hence, when the lawless Danites sent out a colony to smite it with the edge of the sword, and to take possession of it for themselves, they found it an easy prey. The successful invaders then changed the name of the city from Laish to

* Eccles. Hist., vii. 18.

Dan, "after the name of Dan, their father." Thus this tribe was widely divided in Israel; for the original allotment of its portion was in the south-west part of Palestine, whereas, the new colony was in the far north; so that it became proverbial as one of the extremities of the land,—"from Dan even unto Beersheba."



FRESH-WATER TORTOISE.

The city thus obtained became immediately the seat of an established idolatry; for the Danites set up a graven image as an object of worship, which remained "all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh." Thus the tribe of Dan, long before spoken of by the spirit of prophecy as "a serpent by the way, an adder in the path," had the dreadful pre-

eminence of first establishing that apostasy from the true God which at length poisoned and destroyed the whole people.

This very city was one of the two which, in times long afterwards, Jeroboam selected as the seats of his state idolatry; for "the king took counsel and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan."

No remains of the ancient city are now visible; but the fountain still bubbles forth as of old, and contributes its crystal affluent to the renowned Jordan. The site is a small elevation with a level summit in the midst of which is the spring. Dr. Wilson thus describes it:—"We suddenly came upon a circular basin, about a hundred yards wide, in the bottom of which great quantities of water were rising and boiling up, and a considerable number of fresh-water tortoises* were disporting themselves. It formed by far the most copious spring which we had yet seen in the country. Two large streams of the purest water emerge from it, which, after forming a little island, immediately unite into a rapid river, ten

* The Doctor calls them *Testudo Græca;* but he has, no doubt, mistaken the genus; for the land tortoises do not affect the water. The fresh-water tortoises constitute a very different family, that of the *Emydidæ*, to which, doubtless, belong those mentioned in his note.

yards wide, and two feet deep, having a very quick descent through a luxuriant grove of oleanders, briers, and wild figs, and poplar, pistacia, and mulberry-trees. The branch of this river was highest on the eastern side." *

The inhabitants of the region in which these inter-

BUFFALO.

esting localities are situated use the Indian buffalo, in association with the common ox, for the purposes of husbandry. It is an uncouth and unprepossessing animal, with shaggy hair, laterally-spreading horns, and a savage expression of countenance. The hot

* Lands of the Bible (Edinburgh, 1847), p. 170.

and pestilent morass is its favourite resort, where it delights to wallow in the mud and stagnant water, or to remain for hours, in the heat of the day, almost entirely submerged, with its black, broad muzzle alone elevated above the green surface. Its power to bear moisture and heat makes it valuable in the neighbourhood of water; and thus, around Lake Houle and the Sea of Tiberias it is much cultivated. Its prodigious strength, also, renders it a serviceable acquisition, though its treacherous and savage temper is always dangerous. Dr. Robinson considers this to be the Reem (ראם) of the Hebrew Scriptures (translated "unicorn" in our version); but there seems more probability that some species of rhinoceros was intended. In the monuments both of ancient Egypt and of Nineveh, there is a species of wild-bull or buffalo frequently represented under circumstances which seem to imply that the hunting of this savage animal was an exploit worthy of the prowess of a king, and fit to be put into competition with the hunting of the lion himself.

VI.

THE RIVER JARMUK

TOPOGRAPHY.

Ashtaroth Karnaim—Beautiful Lake—Mountains of Bashan and Gilead—Magnificence of the Scenery—Trees of Bashan—The Kingdom of Og—The Eastern Tribes—The Boundary of the Land.

THE COUNTRY OF THE GADARENES.

Demoniacal Possession—The Man among the Tombs—Demons and Swine—A Sinner's Deliverance—Gadara—Its Ancient Sepulchres.

Numbers xxxii.

In considering the remaining rivers of Palestine, it will be convenient to take them in the following order; those which fall into the Jordan and Dead Sea on the east, those which have the same termination on the west side, and those which empty themselves into the Mediterranean.

On the left bank of the Jordan, the first stream of any importance which the traveller meets with is the Jarmuk, or, as it was called by the Greeks, the Hieromax. Its name does not occur in the Scripture, though the region through which it flows is often mentioned both in the Old and in the New Testament. One of its sources is at a place called Mezareib, supposed to be the ancient Ashtaroth Karnaim, or, "the two-horned," a town of Bashan, which was assigned to the Levites. The name of this city indicates its dedication to the Syrian Venus,

"Astarte, queen of heaven, with crescent-horns,"

whose debasing worship was such a snare to Israel, and even captivated their greatest and wisest monarch, King Solomon.

The Jarmuk near this place issues from a lake about a mile in circumference. According to Mr. Buckingham, there is a small grass-covered islet in

the centre, and a great number of fish swim in its crystal waters, equal in size and not inferior in beauty to the elegant gold and silver fishes which we keep in glass vases. The water is sweet and transparent, and is never dried up in the most arid seasons. A copious stream issues from this beautiful lake, which pursues a westerly direction, with comparatively few windings, until, after a course of about forty miles (in a straight line), it empties itself into the Jordan, not far from the southern extremity of the Lake of Gennesaret. At its mouth it is forty yards wide, being nearly as broad and as deep as the Jordan itself. Mr. Buckingham in February found difficulty in fording it, a little above its debouchure.

The lake just mentioned is considered as the source of the Jarmuk, not because it is the most remote, but because it is the most permanent. Many streams appear to combine to form this river, draining a wide extent of country to the eastward; one of these was described to the traveller just named as having its origin three days' journey from the Jordan, at a place called Shellal. This word is used by the Arabs of the Nile, to signify a rapid or a cataract, but whether it indicated such a feature here, he could not clearly understand.

The elevated country, through which the Jarmuk flows, is the ancient mountain-region of Bashan and Gilead. It was renowned for its fertility, its extensive pastures, its high-fed and fierce cattle, and its

towering forests, the "oaks of Bashan" being scarcely less proverbial than the "cedars of Lebanon." Bashan may be considered as lying to the north,

OAKS OF BASHAN.

Gilead to the south, of the Jarmuk. The former is the great pasture-region, the soil being remarkably fertile, and the vegetation most rich and luxuriant.

The latter is more elevated, and more broken into hill and dale. The northern part is somewhat tame, the central picturesque, the southern sublime.

As the traveller recedes from the Lake of Tiberias and from the valley of the Jordan into the heart of this region, the scenery becomes very magnificent. Trees, which had before been scarce, begin to occur, first singly, then in clumps and groves, and at length in forests. The roads wind in the most picturesque manner along the sides of the mountains, or round the fantastic hills, through secluded valleys, and narrow rocky gorges overhung with precipices, out of the sides and clefts of which springs at every turn the Valonidi oak, the characteristic tree of this part of the country. Many other fine trees, the prickly-oak, the olive, and the pine, and another species of Valonidi with broader leaves, are scattered over the less lofty heights; and, at greater elevations, the arbutus and the fir are seen. The enormous crags that jut out from the summits of the mountains are almost concealed by the noble fir-trees that thickly shoot up their dark green heads around them. In the valley, the oleanders, which everywhere border the beds of the winter torrents, grow to a great size, and are uncommonly superb, especially when covered with their masses of magnificent blossom.

Lord Lindsay thus describes a lovely valley of Gilead, a little to the south of the Jarmuk:—"A beautiful narrow glen ushered us into a broad valley, richly wooded to the summits of the hills with noble

prickly oaks, a few pine-trees towering above them. I never should have thought that the shrub which I had seen covering the hills at Hebron could have attained such size and beauty; yet the leaf of the largest tree is not larger than that of the shrubs. I saw an occasional *degub* tree, an arbutus, but the prevailing trees were oaks, prickly and broad-leafed. It was forest scenery of the noblest character; next to that of old England, with which none I ever saw can stand comparison."

A similar testimony is borne by other travellers to the grandeur and beauty of this region. Mr. Buckingham gives the following account of the country between Soof in Gilead, and Om Keiss on the south bank of the Jarmuk, supposed to be the ancient Gadara. "On leaving Soof, we descended into a fine valley, again rising on a gentle ascent, the whole being profusely and beautifully wooded with evergreen oaks below and pines upon the ridge of the hills above, as well as a variety of the lesser trees. This forest, for it fully deserved the name, continued for about four or five miles, when we opened on a more park-like scenery, the ground showing here and there a rich green turf, and the woods becoming less crowded than before. The soil of the road on which we travelled was clayey, with a fine yellow gravel on the surface; and the track was broad and beaten. As we descended to a lower level, the pines disappeared; and on the side of one of the hills, close to the road on our right, we

observed a grotto, carefully hewn down in front, with an arched door of entrance, and a small court and cistern before it. On alighting to examine it, we found it to be an excavated tomb, now containing three stone sarcophagi of the usual form and size. Were it not for the actual presence of these, we should have thought it to have been a cell of residence for some solitary living being, rather than a place of sepulture for the dead, as we knew of no ancient site in the immediate vicinity of the place, nor could we find any traces of other tombs near. Although this solitude had been chosen, and wild bushes had so overgrown its front as almost to conceal it from the view, this sepulchre had been violated as well as all the rest, and its cistern was choked, its court partly filled up, and its sarcophagi uncovered and empty. . . . We reached, at length, a beautiful dell, wooded round on all sides, where we found a small encampment of Bedouins striking their tent, and removing from the more open part of the vale to seek shelter beneath the trees, (on account of the rain). . . A large fire was kindled, cakes were baked for us, coffee burnt, pounded, and prepared, our pipes lighted, and, in short, every office performed for our comfort and refreshment, by those hospitable wanderers, without a thought of compensation. After a stay of half-an-hour, we departed from hence, continuing, still, through the most beautifully-wooded scenery on all sides. Mr. Bankes, who had seen the whole of England, the

greater part of Italy and France, and almost every province of Spain and Portugal, frequently remarked, that, in all his travels, he had met with nothing equal to it, excepting only in some parts of the latter country. . . . It is certain that we were perpetually exclaiming at every turn, How rich! how picturesque! how magnificent! how beautiful! and that we both conceived the scenery alone to be quite worth all the hazard and privation of a journey to the eastward of Jordan." *

The beautiful and fertile country thus described was ruled, at the time of Israel's conquest of Canaan, by the redoubtable Og, King of Bashan, a remnant of an ancient gigantic race. His stature is indicated by his bedstead of iron; "nine cubits (about sixteen feet) was the length thereof, and four cubits (or seven feet) the breadth of it." He marched at the head of his warlike people to repel Israel from the border of his land; but notwithstanding his giant strength and prowess, he was discomfited and slain. Thus his country fell into the hands of the children of Israel; a region which, though not more than about ninety miles in length by thirty in breadth, contained "three-score cities . . . all fenced with high walls, gates, and bars, beside unwalled towns a great many." The enumeration of these cities enables us to form a somewhat definite idea of the power of the Canaanitish nations who were dispossessed before

* Palestine, ii. 240.

Israel, a power which, we believe, has been greatly underrated. We do not certainly know what the population of these walled cities was, but we have some data for concluding that they were not less numerously inhabited than the average of modern cities. The city of Ai, which seems to have belonged to the Jebusites, was viewed, after the destruction of Jericho, for the purpose of estimating the force needful to capture it. The spies returned to Joshua, and said unto him, "Let not all the people go up, but let about 2,000 or 3,000 men go up and smite Ai, and make not all the people to labour thither, *for they are but few.*" The slighting way in which this place was mentioned clearly shows that its strength was much below the average, yet its population is expressly declared to have been 12,000. But if we assume this to have been the average of the fortified towns of Bashan, and that of the "great many" unwalled towns to have been half as numerous, we have the population of this district alone amounting to upwards of a million.

The land of Bashan became the possession of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, who, with the tribe of Reuben, had petitioned for the excellent pasture-lands on the east of Jordan, "because they had cattle." Moses at first thought that their request proceeded from a selfish desire to evade the toils and dangers of the coming war of conquest, and administered a stern reproof. But they disclaimed any such intention, and expressed their readiness to go

over armed before the children of Israel, leaving their families and cattle behind them, pledging themselves not to return until the whole inheritance of the land was divided. Their petition was granted on these conditions, which they faithfully performed.

It has been remarked that the strong desire of Moses, "I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan," contrasted with the unwillingness of the two and a-half tribes, "Bring us not over Jordan," and that they did not see in Canaan a type of the heavenly rest which he, by faith, could see and appreciate. "In their too great haste for a settlement, they petitioned for, and obtained it; but it was a situation very distant from the sanctuary, and it much interrupted their intercourse with their brethen; it was very much exposed to their enemies, and uneasy to themselves; and they seem to have been dispossessed sooner than the other Israelites."* For it was here that Jehovah "began to cut Israel short;" and they were exposed to the tyrannical cruelty of Hazael, the usurper, King of Syria, during all the days of Jehoahaz; and at length they were carried captive into Assyria by Pul and Tiglath-Pileser, perhaps forty years before the same fate befel their brethren on the other side of Jordan.

The Promised Land, properly so called, as Michaelis has observed, was bounded eastward by the

* Scott.

Jordan; and Moses laid no claim to the land east of that river, although, in the end, the aggressions of Sihon, King of the Amorites, and of Og, King of Bashan, occasioned some of this territory to be acquired by right of conquest; when it was given to Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, as being well suited to their peculiarly pastoral mode of life. Yet, although the Jordan was the proper boundary of the Promised Land, we elsewhere find it promised that the eastward boundary should be the Euphrates. In this, however, there is no real contradiction. The boundary of the Holy Land, which the Hebrews were to divide after expelling the inhabitants, and which constituted, in a manner, the citadel of the state, was *one* thing; the boundary beyond which they were not to extend their conquests eastward, or, in other words, that of its outworks, was *another*. The Jordan made the former; the Euphrates the latter. The intervening space between these rivers was not necessarily to be occupied exclusively by Israelites, but to serve as pasturage for their cattle, the greater part of it being fit for no other purpose.

Mark v.

EMBOSOMED in the steep and craggy mountains that rise above the deep-flowing Jarmuk, not more than half-a-dozen miles from its junction with the Jordan, and still nearer the south-east shore of the

Sea of Tiberias, lay the city of Gadara, the capital of the "country of the Gadarenes." Here, in the early part of His gracious ministry, the Lord Jesus gave a signal proof of His power to bind and to destroy Satan, and exhibited Himself as the Seed of the woman, bruising the serpent's head. Almost immediately after He had uttered His memorable discourse on the Mount, He sailed with His disciples across the Lake of Gennesaret. During the passage He majestically rebuked the raging winds and waves, and calmed them with His mighty word. He landed in the country of the Gergesenes, as they are called by Matthew (probably the same as the Girgashites of the Old Testament), or of the Gadarenes, as Mark and Luke designate them. As He walked up into the country, there met him one of those miserable beings whom the evil spirit was permitted to torment and to inhabit. Demoniacal possession was terribly common at this time among degenerate Israel, and perhaps nothing, except the actual rejection of the Son of God, shows how deeply the nation had fallen from its high estate, than this fact. In the early days of Israel, Jehovah Himself had personally dwelt among them in manifested power and sensible glory; in their last days Satan dwelt among them in manifested power and malignity, and with a personal presence.

Some have indeed maintained, with Sadducean scepticism, that these possessions were only instances of mental aberration or madness, and that the Blessed

Lord, who is "the Truth," and His apostles, writing under the plenary inspiration of Him who is "the Spirit of Truth," merely pandered to popular superstition in stating these cases to be what they were not! Various attributes of distinct personality, as speech, fear, deprecation, intreaty, individuality, number, and change of place, are ascribed to the indwelling demons: they recognised Him as the Holy One of God, who was driving them out, but whom man knew only by Divine revelation; they rendered Him an involuntary homage, and in shuddering horror alluded to the torment which at an appointed time they knew they should receive from Him. The Lord Himself calls them evil and unclean spirits, Beelzebub, and Satan.

The miserable Gadarene who now met the Lord was a notable example of Satanic energy. He habitually had his dwelling among the tombs, where his supernatural power and ferocity rendered him a terror to the neighbourhood. He wore no clothes, but lived in brute-like exposure to the elements. No fetters could bind him; for chains and bands were broken asunder by his superhuman strength; and no man could tame him. "And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones."

But the period of his emancipation was arrived; for the Lord of angels as well as men appeared, to deliver him from his terrible enemies. The number of malignant spirits that occupied as a tabernacle the

body of this wretched man was great indeed, since, to express it, they compare themselves to a legion, a division of the Roman army, which at that time consisted of more than 6,000 men! What an idea does this give us of the immense number of the "principalities, and powers, and spiritual beings of wickedness,"* that are marshalled and arrayed under the power of Satan! Against these the believer is called to wrestle; but he needs not fear them, for Jesus is the Captain of his salvation, and in Him the saint shall surely conquer.

Being commanded by a word which they could not resist nor evade, to come out of the man, the spirits mysteriously requested permission to enter the bodies of swine, which, in a numerous herd, were feeding at a considerable distance on the steep hills that overlooked the lake. The Lord for wise purposes gave them leave; and presently the whole two thousand swine rushed madly down the declivity, and perished in the waters.

Thus, the God of Israel coming down to view His own goodly land, found it occupied by demons and swine,—unclean spirits and unclean beasts! And His people were so alienated in their minds from Him, as to prefer the presence of their demons and

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* The evil spirits are not in the heavenlies; but our wrestling against them is "in (*i.e.*, on, or in the matter of) the superheavenlies," to which believers are even now raised in Christ, our Head. Eph. vi. 12. (See Gr. and cf. i. 3, 20; ii. 6; iii. 10.)

their swine to Him who would have delivered them from both. "The whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts!"

But one, at least, has formed a different estimate. It is the poor creature who had been so long the object and instrument of Satan's malice and power. He is now calmly sitting at the feet of his heavenly Deliverer, clothed and in his right mind; and finding it a sweet privilege to hear the words of grace and truth that fall from his lips, he prays that he may be permitted to continue with Him. And though this request is denied, it is only because the Lord calls him to a still higher place than that of personal enjoyment, however holy; he is sent forth to his neighbours to be a witness to them of the power and goodness and grace of his Lord.

Most, if not all, of the miracles of mercy wrought by the Lord Jesus, are considered as typical of the still more important deliverance which He came to achieve from spiritual maladies. He went about, healing all that were oppressed of the devil; but none of the maladies wherewith Satan is permitted to afflict the bodies of men are comparable to that dominion which he has over every soul by nature, through sin. Like the demoniac, who had his dwelling among the tombs, the sinner dwells in the doleful regions of corruption and death; like him, he is unclothed, destitute of righteousness, and therefore exposed to the wrath of God; the prey of fierce lusts

and passions, he breaks through the restraints of the Divine law, whose fetters cannot effectually bind him, because he is "weak through the flesh." Like the wretch who was always "crying and cutting himself," the sinner is his own enemy; he continually craves after happiness, but all his efforts only add sore to sore; "he heaps up wrath against the day of wrath," and drags out an existence ever more and more miserable.

Such an one is found by Jesus; the strong one armed is driven out by a stronger than he. The happy man is a new creature; he has forsaken the place of death for a part with Him who is essential Life; he is clothed with a righteousness, perfect and without spot before God; he is now made gentle, and subject, not by the fetters of law, but by the sweet bands of grace; he sits at the feet of Jesus, finding his highest joy in communion with Him; and he is content to go forth at the heavenly bidding, furnished out of the heavenly treasury, to testify, in the very territories of Satan, to the power and grace and love, the ability and willingness to save, that characterize his Lord, of which he is himself a living witness.

The ancient city of Gadara survives in the modern Arab village Om-Keiss. The hill on which it stands is covered with the remains of columns and edifices; and what is still more interesting, the sides of the mountains are perforated with caves anciently used as sepulchres. These tombs are now occupied as

dwellings, not only by individuals, but by whole families. One of these, when Mr. Buckingham visited the place, was used as a carpenter's shop, in which its occupant was engaged in constructing a rude plough; while an ancient sarcophagus, that remained within the tomb in perfect preservation, was used by the family as a provision chest.

Captains Irby and Mangles have more particularly described the same interesting features of the place. "Before sunset we arrived at Om-Keiss. We were very kindly received by the sheikh of the natives who inhabit the ancient sepulchres. . . . The walls of the ancient Gadara are still easily discernible: within them you find the pavement of the city very perfect; the traces of the chariot-wheels are still marked in the stones. We found the remains of a row of columns which lined the main street on either side; two theatres in tolerable preservation are within the walls, and without them to the northward is the necropolis; the sepulchres, which are all under ground, are hewn out of the live rock, and the doors, which are very massive, are cut out of immense blocks of stone: some of these are now standing and actually working on their hinges, and used by the natives; of course the hinge is nothing but a part of the stone left projecting at each end, and let in to a socket cut in the rock; the faces of the doors were cut in the shape of panels."*

* Travels, p. 297.

VII.

THE RIVER JABBOK.

TOPOGRAPHY.

Gilead—Bozrah—Picturesque Ravine—Aspect of the River—The Wild Boar—Forests of Gilead—Jacob at the Ford—The Prayer—The Wrestling—The Blessing.

RABBAH AMMON.

Bedstead of Og--Joab's Conquest—Philadelphia—Present Desolation.

As the Jarmuk drains the waters of Bashan, so the Jabbok may be considered as carrying to the Jordan those which pour down from the mountains of Gilead. For though these regions are not accurately defined in Scripture, we know that each of the terms designates a considerable territory, which was bounded (somewhat vaguely) by the land of Moab on the south; and that Bashan was the more northern. There is also a sufficiently marked difference in the physical character of the two regions, Gilead being the more mountainous. Though it pursues a course of sixty miles in length, the Jabbok is but an inconsiderable stream in comparison with the Jarmuk. It is believed to have its rise in the Hauran, not far from the source of the Jarmuk; whence it flows westward to Bozrah, the renowned capital of ancient Edom, the subject of such awful denunciations in prophecy.* "Bozrah is now, for the most part, a heap of ruins, a most dreary spectacle; here and there the direction of a street or alley is discernible, but that is all. The modern inhabitants, a mere handful, are almost lost in the maze of ruins." Ac-

* That is, supposing that the Bostra of the Greeks and Romans was the same as the Bozrah of Scripture.

cording to the oath of Jehovah, Bozrah has become "*a desolation and reproach, a waste and a curse!*"

From this ancient city, the Jabbok, or Zerka, as it is now called, bends to the south for about fifteen miles, after which it again turns to the westward, and passes the Kal-at-Zerka, or Castle of Zerka, one of the stations of the Syrian pilgrims' caravan. Up to this point its course has been across a wide arid plain, sometimes dipping underground, and rising again to the surface; and its waters are frequently dried up by the summer's sun. But here it enters a wilder scene, for its picturesque course is cleft through the mountains of Gilead, which rise in lofty precipices on either side. About midway between this point and its junction with the Jordan, it is described by Mr. Buckingham, who crossed it here, as running between tall and abrupt cliffs, five hundred feet high, which look as if cleft by some convulsion of nature to give it passage. It is, in fact, a deep ravine in a plain, the breadth from cliff to cliff being not more than a hundred yards, and the dark sides of the hollow chasm are, in general, destitute of verdure. The traveller descended into this ravine by winding paths, since it was everywhere too steep to go directly down; and found at the bottom of it a small river which flowed from the eastward, appearing here to have just made a sharp bend from the northward, and from this point to go nearly west, to discharge itself into the Jordan. The banks of this stream were so thickly wooded with oleander and plane-

trees, wild olives and wild almonds in blossom, pink and white cyclamen flowers and others, the names of which were unknown to him, with tall and waving reeds at least fifteen feet in height, that he could not perceive the waters through them from above; though the presence of these luxuriant borders marked the winding of its course, and the murmur of its flow was echoed through its deep channel, so as to be heard distinctly from afar. The river here was not more than ten yards wide, but it was deeper than the Jordan, and nearly as rapid, so that it was forded with difficulty. It waters were clear, and agreeable to the taste.*

At a point lower down, where it approaches the Jordan, Burckhardt found it "a small river," in the beginning of July; it is, however, a permanent stream from its entrance among the hills, owing to the numerous torrents that run down their precipitous sides into it. Here its banks are covered with the prickly *Solanum furiosum*, which attains a considerable size.

Captain Lynch, of the late American Expedition, has described the appearance of the Jabbok, as it issues from its rocky gorge. As they passed down the Jordan in their boats, the travellers noticed the lofty hills on the left, "immense masses of siliceous conglomerate, with occasional limestone," extending as far as the eye could reach. High up in the faces

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* Buckingham's Palestine, vol. ii. p. 109.

of these hills were seen immense caverns and excavations, but whether natural or artificial could not be determined. The mouths of the caves appeared blackened as if by smoke; which suggested the thought that they might be the haunts of robbers. The Jabbok was found to be a small stream, trickling down a deep and wide torrent bed. The water was sweet, but the stones upon the bare exposed bank, and the leaves of the ghurrah trees that were there in abundance, were coated with salt; a deposition of the atmosphere, doubtless brought by the wind from the Dead Sea, which is about twenty miles distant A second bed, at that time (April 17) dry, indicated that, in the floods, the stream enters the Jordan by two mouths.*

Just below the Jabbok, the party saw a wild boar crossing the river. These fierce and voracious animals are very common in the Ghor and the valleys that open into it. They issue from the woods at night, and commit great havoc in the fields and vineyards. trampling and tearing down even more than they devour: "The boar out of the wood doth waste it." Burckhardt was informed that the Arabs of the Ghor are unable to cultivate the common barley, on account of the eagerness with which the wild swine feed on it; they are therefore obliged to grow a less esteemed sort, which the hogs are too dainty to touch. Irby and Mangles once saw a valley grubbed up in all

* The Jordan and Dead Sea, p. 253.

directions in furrows by the wild boars; so that the soil had all the appearance of having been literally ploughed up. The boars grow to a very large size, are of a dingy yellowish grey, or blackish hue, and of a most unprepossessing appearance. They are bold and desperate, and their tusks make them formidable adversaries.

BOAR IN A VINEYARD.

The character of the land of Gilead, through whose ravines and chasms the Jabbok darkling flows, is similar to that already described as marking the hills of Bashan. The traveller who climbs the heights from the sultry vale of the Jordan, or from the arid plains of the Hauran, hails with pleasure the refresh-

ing coolness of the mountain breeze; he reclines under the grateful shade of the oak and wild pistachio, which form thick groves and forests impervious to the sun; while the sylvan scenery everywhere reminds him of that of Europe. The charm of this pleasant region is increased by the ceaseless songs and other voices of birds, sounds which are little heard in the parched and treeless plains. Travellers speak with delight of "the cooing of the wood-pigeons, the calling of partridges—magnificent birds, as large as pheasants,—the incessant hum of insects, and the hiss of grasshoppers [probably tree-hoppers, *cicadæ*, are meant], singing in the trees as happy as kings." The prospect from the elevated peaks is of the most sublime extent, reaching from the snowy summits of Lebanon and Hermon on the north, to the hills of Judah and the mountains of Edom on the south; looking over the Lake of Tiberias and the Dead Sea, and the whole breadth of Palestine in front, the vast horizon bounded by the Mediterranean, like a band of polished steel girding half the landscape.

On the bank of this river, and, as well as can be judged, near the middle of that portion of its course which lies through the mountains of Gilead, occurred a memorable incident in the history of the patriarch Jacob. Many years before, the indignation of his brother Esau at his having procured, by a successful falsehood, his father's blessing, had compelled Jacob to flee into Padan-aram, where still dwelt the de-

scendants of Nahor. There he had resided for twenty years; and now with his two wives and a large family of children and servants, and much wealth in cattle, he is on his way back to the land of Canaan. But, as he approaches the country of Seir, the territory of Esau, fear of his brother's resentment overwhelms him; and in much anxiety of mind he takes the most prudent precautions to mollify him. He first of all sends a respectful message, announcing his return, in which he delicately mentions the wealth that he has acquired; that Esau may not suppose that he is still a needy adventurer, ready to put-in his claim for the possession of that birthright which he had so unworthily obtained. By the expressions carefully selected, "my lord,—my lord Esau,—thy servant Jacob,—that I may find grace in thy sight," —he would also express his readiness to waive for the present and in his own person the dominion over his brother, which had been part of the stolen blessing. Probably, also, he had learned that the value of that blessing and of that birthright was rather spiritual than temporal; and its range rather national than personal.

The news which Jacob's messenger brought back, —that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men,—was well calculated to appal him; for we cannot doubt that the first intention of the bold hunter was to avenge the wrong which the mention of his brother's name had vividly recalled to his memory. Jacob's resource is in prayer. He does

not neglect prudential means, it is true; but, setting apart a princely present of two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals,—he divides them into three droves, separating them rather widely to produce a greater effect, and sends them by the hands of prudent servants, with a most submissive and respectful message, to appease his angry brother. But his last and best resource is in prayer; having brought his whole company over the Jabbok, he returns across the ford to pass the night in fervent pleading with God.

Solemn indeed is the scene! Midnight has thrown her sable wing over the lone valley, into which the stars can shed but few and feeble rays, almost entirely shut out as they are by the tall cliffs that tower up on each side. Silence is all around, broken only by the earnest supplications and intercessions, the groans, and cries, and stifled sobs, that burst from the anxious Jacob. His pleadings are most instructive, for he takes hold of God's own covenant and promises, presenting nothing of his own but unworthiness; but again and again reminding Jehovah of His gracious assurances of blessing, and making use of past mercies as a plea for future ones: "And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, Jehovah which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the

least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude."

The night is far spent, and Jacob has as yet received no sensible token that he is accepted; but his Father hath seen in secret. At length there appears One in human form, and engages in wrestling with him, but prevails not against him,—a symbolic action, to express the need and success of importunate prayer. There is no sort of contention that so brings out strength, activity, watchfulness, patience, and perseverance as wrestling; and therefore it has always been felt to be peculiarly suitable to represent strong faith in fervent prayer. We know, and doubtless Jacob knew, who the Mighty Stranger was, who thus put to the test his persevering importunity, but suffered Himself to be overcome. He is called a Man; but He is also called God, and that by Jacob himself; and the inspired Hosea calls him at once God, the Angel, and Jehovah of Hosts. Doubtless it was God the ever-blessed Son, who on many occasions had thus early assumed the human form, which afterwards He was to take into permanent union with Himself.

Yes, Jacob well knew his Almighty Opponent; for he exclaimed, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." And though the sinews of his fleshly strength were withered in the conflict, that was his real gain; for the breaking down of all the vigour of the flesh is that which always brings in the resources of Christ; and the believer, really athirst for the highest good, can say, "Most gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. When I am weak, then am I strong."

"And He blessed him there." And He gave him *a new name*, for as a Prince he had had power with God and with men, and had prevailed. Henceforth Jacob goes on his way rejoicing: the sorrows of the night are gone with its shadows; and though, as he once more crosses the ford, he halts upon his thigh in a deeper sense of weakness than before, the glad rays of the sun that burst upon him over the eastern mountain, irradiating the whole vale of Penuel, are a fit emblem of the heavenly light and comfort that are filling his heart. He can sing as he goes,—

"Contented, now, upon my thigh
I halt till life's short journey end:
All helplessness, all weakness, I
On Thee alone for strength depend.
Nor have I power from Thee to move:
Thy nature and Thy name is Love."

2 Samuel XII. Ezekiel XXV.

ONE of the tributaries of the Jabbok is the Moiet Ammân, a little stream coming from the south, and pursuing its course partly underground. Near its head once stood the renowned metropolis of the Ammonites, Rabbah-Ammon. Here the iron bedstead which bespoke the strength and size of the gigantic king of Bashan was preserved as a memorial after his death. The city appears to have consisted of two parts, one of which, containing the royal residence, was built in the bed of the stream, which thus encompassed it. When David's general, Joab, besieged it, he succeeded, after a tedious blockade, in taking this "city of waters"; on which he sent for the king, that he might have the honour, in his own person, of taking that part which was properly the city. Thus this noble metropolis, with the country of which it was the capital, fell into David's hands, together with immense spoil, among which the royal crown of the kings of Ammon is mentioned, the weight (or value?) of which, with its precious stones, was a talent of gold,—£5,500 of our money, according to the present value of the precious metals.

The city was rebuilt by Ptolemy Philadelphus with much magnificence, and received from him the name of Philadelphia. But Jehovah had predicted its ruin; by the prophet Ezekiel He had pronounced that Rabbah of the Ammonites should be a desolate

heap; that He would make her a stable for camels, and a couching-place for flocks. Travellers tell us how literally this is fulfilled. Burckhardt actually found a party of Arabs stabling their camels in the ruins of Rabbah. Mr. Buckingham, speaking of a building among the ruins, and constructed out of the remains of yet older buildings, says, "On entering it we came to an open square court, with arched recesses on each side. . . . These were originally open passages, and had arched doorways facing each other; but the first of these was found wholly closed up, and the last was partially filled up, leaving only a narrow passage, just sufficient for the entrance of one man, and of *the goats*, which the Arab keepers drive in here occasionally for shelter during the night." This traveller lay down among *flocks of sheep and goats*, close beside the ruins of Ammon; and particularly remarks that, during the night, he was almost entirely prevented from sleeping by the bleating of flocks.* At every step in this once populous region there are the vestiges of ancient cities, the ruins of magnificent temples, public edifices, and Greek churches; but *all are desolate*.

* Buckingham's Arab Tribes, p. 72.

VIII.

THE RIVER ARNON.

THE WADY MOJEB.

Picturesque Ravine—Wild Beast—Gazelle.

THE BORDER OF MOAB.

Defeat of Sihon—Aroer—The City in the River—Interesting Egyptian Record.

THE DOOM OF MOAB.

The Prophecy—The present Fulfilment—Wanderers in Misery.

THIS is one of the streams whose waters help to fill the deep and dreadful gulf that forms the Dead Sea. It rises in the mountains to the east of that lake, and is formed by the confluence of three minor streams. It was pre-eminently the river of Moab, and at length constituted the frontier of that country, dividing it from the territory of the tribe of Reuben; it is now known to the Arabs by the name of the Mojeb, a word which bears no small resemblance to Moab.

We have fewer modern notices of this river than of most others, as it has been rarely visited by travellers. In many respects, however, it appears to resemble the Jabbok, especially in flowing through a narrow precipitous gorge of wild sublimity. Burckhardt crossed it in July, about twenty miles from its mouth, and thus describes its appearance: "The view which the Modjeb presents is very striking. From the bottom, where the river runs through a narrow strip of verdant level, about forty yards across, the steep and barren banks rise to a great height, covered with immense blocks of stone which have rolled down from the upper strata; so that when viewed from above, the valley looks like a deep chasm formed by some tremendous convulsion of the earth, into which there seems no possibility of descending

to the bottom. The distance from the edge of one precipice to that of the opposite one is about two miles in a straight line. We descended the northern bank of the Wady by a foot-path which winds among the broken masses of rock, dismounting on account of the steepness of the road. There are three fords across the Modjeb, of which we took that the most frequented. I had never felt such suffocating heat as I experienced in this valley, from the concentrated rays of the sun and their reflection from the rocks. We were thirty-five minutes in reaching the bottom. The river, which flows in a rocky bed, was almost dried up; but its bed bears evident marks of its impetuosity during the rainy season; the shattered fragments of large pieces of rock which had been broken from the banks nearest the river, and carried along by the torrent, being deposited at a considerable height above the present channel of the stream. A few defle and willow-trees grow on its banks."*

The steep and narrow valley here described becomes more steep and narrow as it approaches the Dead Sea; and in the latter part of its course forms a gorge about a hundred feet wide, the sides of which have almost the regularity of perpendicular walls. The American expedition, viewing its mouth from the sea, went on shore to examine it, and spent a night in the dark and lonely recess. The river has formed a delta of soil around the entrance, through

* Burckhardt's Travels, p. 372.

which it flows to the sea. Within the chasm it is about eighty-four feet broad, so that it occupies almost the whole width, leaving only a narrow bank; it is, however, fordable, being only four feet deep at the

THE RIVER ARNON.

utmost, in the beginning of May. The walls of the ravine are formed of red, brown, and yellow sandstone; those on the south side being mingled red and yellow, but those on the north a soft rich red;

they are worn by the winter rains into the most fantastic forms, not unlike Egyptian architecture, as will be seen by the engraving, which, by the courtesy of its liberal publisher, we are permitted to copy from the narrative of the expedition, entitled, "The Jordan and the Dead Sea." Captain Lynch found it difficult to believe that some were not the work of art. He walked and waded some distance up the gorge, and found it uniform in width, gradually bending to the south-east, so as to limit the view at any time to 150 or 200 yards. Though the sides appear perpendicular, there must be some passage or track down the cliffs, for the travellers observed the footsteps of camels, and marks of an Arab encampment. A gun which they fired reverberated finely against the sides, like repeated and long-continued peals of loud thunder, startling the birds from their nestling places. They observed the tracks of many wild beasts, and among them those of a large feline animal which Captain Lynch calls the tiger, but which was probably the leopard, as the tiger is not found in Western Asia. They saw also the footsteps of many gazelles, and the body of a dead one.*

This beautiful animal (*Antilope Arabica*) is highly characteristic of Palestine, where it is found in almost all parts of the country, but chiefly in wild, barren, and rocky wastes. Its colour is a yellowish brown, its form is graceful, its motions elegant and sprightly,

* Jordan and Dead Sea, p. 368.

THE GAZELLE.

and its large languishing dark eye, so soft and swimming, is the very symbol of beauty. It is the "Roe" of the Scriptures, which so often affords images of activity and grace. Excessively wild and timid, the gazelles associate in large herds, in which one acts the part of a sentinel to warn his fellows of approaching danger; when they dart away, bounding over the rocks, and leaping from crag to crag with the fleetness of the wind. When taken young, they readily become familiar, and their beauty and playfulness render them favourites with the Oriental ladies. Thus Moore, with his usual truth to nature, makes Lalla Rookh say,—

> "I never nursed a dear gazelle
> To glad me with its soft black eye,
> But when it came to know me well,
> And love me,—it was sure to die."

Numbers XXI.

IT was at the Arnon that Israel began to possess their land. For though the country east of the Jordan had not been originally promised to them, yet, as the kings of this region chose to assault the (to them unoffending) strangers, the conquest of their lands was the result. The people were forbidden to make war upon Moab, but as the Amorites had some time before dispossessed the Moabites of that portion of their territory which lay north of the Arnon, this region

was not now included in the prohibition. The Amorites met Israel at Jahaz, a few miles north of the Arnon. It was the first time that the latter had seen war, those who had formerly engaged Amalek having now all passed away; yet, strong in the strength of Jehovah, they discomfited their adversaries, and slew Sihon the Amoritish king, and possessed his country extending from the Arnon to the Jabbok.

Hence this first conquest became a sort of type of the whole, and was commemorated in a poetical composition, called "The Book of the Wars of Jehovah," the subject of which was "What He did in the Red Sea, and in the brooks of Arnon."

It was to a city in the border of Arnon that Balak came to meet Balaam, when he had induced the Syrian prophet to visit him for the purpose of cursing Israel. But their gracious Lord turned the curse into a blessing.

Possibly, this city was Aroer, which was situated on the north side of the river. Burckhardt found its ruins on the edge of the precipice that overlooks the Arnon, and the ancient name is still preserved, with scarcely any modification, Araayr. But, like Rabbah, this city consisted of two parts, one on the bank, the other in the bed, of the stream: for we find repeated mention of "the city that is in the midst of the river,"* in conjunction with "Aroer that is on the bank of the

* Josh. xiii. 9, 16. (See also 2 Sam. xxiv. 5.)

river Arnon." It is an extremely interesting fact, that in the great paintings of the Egyptian wars, which have been recently brought to light, there is an event recorded which seems to apply to this city. It is the representation of the war which took place in the fifth year of Rameses Mei-amoun, between the Egyptians and the Shetha, a people whom Mr. Osburn has in a very convincing manner identified with the Moabites, called "children of Sheth" by Balaam in Numbers xxiv. 17. The period of the scene seems to have been the year 1473 B.C. of our common Biblical chronology, or about eighteen years after Israel had crossed the Red Sea.

The Shetha, in this great picture, are represented as laying siege to a fortress garrisoned by a people in alliance with the Egyptians, to whom the latter had applied for succour. The besieging army is seen investing the city, which is strongly fortified. A body of infantry drawn up in three close phalanxes of 8,000 men each, before the walls of the besieged city, turn to receive the attack of the Egyptian king who has marched to raise the siege. This he effects, and takes the camp of the besiegers.

In this action, which, from the elaborate manner in which it is depicted, and from its repetition, was evidently considered as of importance, the city is represented as *standing on an island in the midst of a river*, and connected with the shore by bridges. We need not say how exactly this agrees with the position of the Moabitish city Aroer; and the event

recorded may have been an attempt made by Moab to recover this their own city, which, as we learn from Scripture, the Amorites had, at about this period, taken from them. Their failure also well agrees with the fact, that at the time of the arrival of the children of Israel, the city Aroer still continued in the possession of the Amorites.

Jeremiah XLVIII. Isaiah XVI., XVII.

THE pride and arrogance of Moab in later times provoked the anger of Jehovah, who by His prophets denounced its desolation: "Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against Jehovah. The cities of Aroer are forsaken; they shall be for flocks which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid. Moab shall be a perpetual desolation." "The days come, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels." "O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth." "As a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so the daughters of Moab shall be at the fords of Arnon."

How minutely this has been fulfilled Oriental travellers have abundantly shown. The wandering Bedouins roam over the waste that was once thickly covered with cities; and, plundering the fruits of

industry, whenever they are produced, compel the miserable inhabitants to wander elsewhere in search of a subsistence which the fruitful soil would yield them in abundance. Volney remarks that the wretched peasants live in perpetual dread of losing their harvests, which they have no sooner gathered in, than they hasten to secure them in private places, and retire among the rocks which border on the Dead Sea.* And, at the other extremity of the land of Moab, Seetzen found many families living in caverns, whom he designates in scriptural language, "the inhabitants of the rocks."† Near the ruined Heshbon, there are many artificial caves in a long range of perpendicular cliffs, in some of which are chambers and small sleeping-rooms. Burckhardt thus describes the miserable descendants of Moab, whom he found in the Wady Wale, one of the tributaries of the Arnon. "They *wander about* in misery, have very few horses, and are not able to feed any flocks of sheep or goats . . . Their tents are very wretched; both men and women go almost naked, the former being only covered round the waist, and the women [the *daughters of Moab* at the fords of Arnon] wearing nothing but a loose shirt hanging in rags about them!" ‡

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* Volney's Trav. vol. ii. p. 344. † Seetzen's Trav. p. 26.
‡ Burckhardt, p. 370.

IX.

THE BROOK ZERED.

THE BOUNDARY OF THE DESERT.

Doubtful Identity—Es Saideh— Beni Hamed—Wady Ahsa—Mount Seir—The Faithless Spies—The Forty Years' Wandering.

THE identity of this stream has not been fully established. Some have supposed it to be the modern Es Saideh, a tributary of the Arnon, on the south side. Others have found it in the Beni Hamed, an inconsiderable torrent, not more than six or seven miles long, which, rising near the ruins of the ancient Rabbah Moab, falls into the Dead Sea near the bottom of its eastern bay. But it has been lately, with more probability, assigned to the Wady Ahsa, the largest stream that flows into the shallow area at the southern extremity of the sea. The course of this river is about thirty-five miles, from its rise near Kulat el Ahsy to its mouth just opposite the dreary salt-mountain of Usdum. An extensive plain, very slightly rising inland, covered with verdure, all unwonted in this vicinity, but terminating seaward in a broad bank of soft mud, is intersected by the stream at the termination of its course, which for the most part lies through the dark frowning rocks of Edom, the ancient Mount Seir. Rugged as these mountains are, however, they have not the terrible barrenness of those to the west of the Arabah; though they are more lofty. Their sides are studded with clumps of trees; and the valleys are full of

shrubs and flowers, with a good deal of land under cultivation.

The Brook Zered is mentioned only in connection with the termination of the desert-journey of the children of Israel. It appears to have formed the boundary between the fertile and populous land of Moab, and the Desert of Arabia.

After the people who had been brought out of Egypt had sojourned in the wilderness about two years, and had received the law of God with all its elaborate ordinances and ceremonial, they came to the southern border of the land, whence spies were sent to search the country. The evil report, which the faithless timidity of most of them gave, acting on the unbelief of the host, caused a mutiny (ostensibly against Moses, but really against Jehovah), that shut out the whole of that generation from ever entering into the Land of Promise. Jehovah sware in His wrath, that they should not enter into His rest; commanding the host to turn again into the wilderness, and announcing His irrevocable decree, that not one of that whole number, from twenty years old and upward, should see the good land which they had thus despised, except Joshua and Caleb, the faithful spies. Forty days had been occupied in searching the land; and, therefore, forty years, each day answering to a year, shall the people wander in the dreary desert, until the whole of that unbelieving generation be taken away by death.

At length the period passed away; and, by the

faithfulness of Jehovah, Israel were brought to the Brook Zered, just thirty-eight years after the time when the spies returned to the camp at Kadesh-barnea; and it was found that all the generation of the men of war were wasted out from among the host, as Jehovah had sworn unto them.

The Lord is true to His threatenings as well as to His promises; unbelief as effectually shuts us up to the former, as it shuts us out from the latter. Blessed tidings of a prepared rest have been proclaimed to us also, but those alone who believe "do enter into rest." "Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." For "this is the work of God, that we believe on Him whom He hath sent."

X.

THE BROOK CHERITH.

ELIJAH'S RETIREMENT.

Brook near Bethshan—Wady Kelt—Jericho—Caverns—The Brook—Drought—The Judgment of Apostasy—Obedience—The Ravens—A Trial of Faith—An Encouragement of Faith—Solitude with God.

1 Kings xvii.

MODERN researches in Biblical Geography have succeeded in identifying many localities of high interest, that until lately were doubtful, or altogether unknown. Yet much still remains to be done; and perhaps not a few places of note in history may be lost, beyond the possibility of recovery. The interesting scene of Elijah's retirement from the fury of Ahab, the wicked king of Samaria, is one of those which we cannot at present determinately appropriate. Local traditions had placed it at a brook on the east side of Jordan, flowing into that river at a point a few miles below the ford at Bethshan. Dr. Kitto, in his notes in the Pictorial Bible, observes that if Elijah had been apprehensive of Ahab's persecution, he would probably not have been satisfied without interposing the Jordan between himself and his pursuers. The phrase "before Jordan," which is used to designate the locality of the Brook Cherith, he considers as favouring this belief; the term "before," usually signifying "eastward of." "The district is finely broken into hill and vale; and being well wooded, and caverns being formed in the sides of some of the hills, it furnished as secure a retreat to the fugitive prophet as could be well selected,

unless he had retired to the mountains or deserts on the outskirts of the kingdom."*

But in a later publication this learned commentator favours the identification of the Brook Cherith with the Wady Kelt, in the vicinity of Jericho, suggested by Professor Robinson; and the evidence, we think, preponderates for this appropriation. Josephus expressly says that the prophet retired to the *southern* parts of the country; and local tradition has generally (though not uniformly) placed the scene to the west of the Jordan. Nor would the situation be less secured from Ahab's fury than the country beyond the river; for this locality was situate in the kingdom of Judah, and consequently out of the jurisdiction of the Samaritan monarch. The word rendered "before," sometimes signifies "towards," which would agree as well with this supposition as the former; and, finally, the resemblance of the modern to the ancient name is no slight point in the evidence.†

The stream called the Kelt receives contributions from a great number of winter-torrents that wind among the hills to the west of the plain of Jericho. It is itself but a torrent, dry in summer; but in winter it pours a large body of water out of a deep

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* Pict. Bib. *in loco.*

† "The Arabic form *Kelt*, and the Hebrew *Cherith* are, indeed, not exactly the same; though the change from Resh to Lam, and that of Kaph into Koph are sometimes found. See Gesenius's Heb. Lex." (*Note to Dr. Robinson's Bibl. Res.*, vol. ii. p. 289.)

and gloomy gorge in the mountains, and winds brawling along its rocky bed through the plain, till it enters the Jordan. About two miles below its emergence from the mountains, it passes a castle and modern village, which bear the name of Rîha or Erîha, a degenerate representative, both in name and character, of the ancient Jericho. "One single solitary palm now timidly rears its head, where once stood the renowned city of palm-trees." North of the stream, a lofty mountain lifts its bold precipitous front, naked and rugged, with a chapel on the very summit. Tradition reports that this was the "exceeding high mountain" which witnessed the temptation of our blessed Lord; that from hence the devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, in a moment of time.

The mountains from which this brook issues are mostly precipitous in their character. They are chiefly composed of indurated chalk, often presenting large beds and slopes in a loose form, and absolutely barren. The strata frequently protrude in various broken and fantastic masses; while the faces of the ravines are everywhere pierced with natural and artificial caves. The whole region, so wild and almost inaccessible, is well calculated to afford a secure retirement to one desirous of avoiding a persecuting enemy. Perhaps here were concealed Jehovah's prophets, hidden by the faithful Obadiah from Jezebel's fury, and fed with bread and water; and here, perhaps, the sighs and tears of many others

of the Lord's hidden ones may have ascended to heaven; men of whom the world was not worthy; who yet were driven out as vagabonds to wander in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.*

Far up in the heart of this ravine, shut in by the grey and mossy cliffs that almost meet overhead, sits a venerable man clothed in the coarsest attire,—a garment of black camel's hair, bound with a leathern girdle. At his feet the brook runs in its stony bed, making perpetual music as it frets and foams among the rocky masses that lie in its channel. Stern and frowning as are the huge precipices, rent with many a fissure and yawning cave, the bottom of the gorge is not unpleasant; for a narrow belt of verdure runs up on each side of the crystal brook, and now and then expands into little grassy slopes, shadowed with bushes. At the back of one of these miniature lawns is the mouth of a cavern, so well concealed from view by a protection of the rock, and by the luxuriant creeping plants that hang in verdant festoons over it, as to afford a secure retreat. Here, seated on a block of smooth stone, is the witness for Jehovah against Israel,—the prophet Elijah.

The refreshing coolness and verdure of this spot afford a remarkable contrast to the condition of the country around. For many months there has been neither rain nor dew in the land of Israel; the

* Heb. xi. 38.

heavens above have been as brass, and the earth as iron. The sun, day after day, pours down his burning rays, without the shadow of a cloud to mitigate the heat; the winter-rains that used to fill the brooks have entirely failed, and the vivifying element, at a time when every valley and dell used to be overflowing with water, is found only in a few permanent rivers, which are themselves so diminished as to arouse the fear that they soon will fail and dry up also.

The land that used to be covered with green pastures and fields of corn is almost like the barren desert; the fig-trees and the olives have cast their half-formed abortive fruits; the vines are withered on the terraces; many of the cattle have already died, and the few that remain fill the torrid air with their mournful bleatings and lowings for that which they cannot obtain. Famine is already stalking through the land, and the inhabitants are almost dependent for water on the wells, whence they have to fetch it from long distances, at great expense and labour.

Why is it that God's chosen people in this their own goodly land are suffering hunger and thirst? Because they have turned aside from Jehovah. They have forsaken His covenant, thrown down His altars, and slain His prophets with the sword; true worship is almost ceased out of the land; they have followed Baalim, and are mad upon their idols. Elijah saw all this, and his spirit was stirred within him; he looked round in vain for righteousness and truth;

the faithful were minished from among the children of men; he saw the fearful alienation, the terrible apostasy, and wept over it: he did more, "he prayed earnestly." He saw that nothing but strong measures would avail; and therefore from his home in the mountains of Gilead he prayed earnestly for severe chastisement upon Israel, that Jehovah's rod might bring them back to Himself. And then he girded himself for testimony; and, in guilty Samaria, in the presence of the apostate Ahab, the faithful Tishbite denounced the solemn yet merciful judgment that his prayers had drawn down upon the sinful nation, the people laden with iniquity: "As Jehovah the God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

But did Elijah take any pleasure in witnessing the sufferings of his people? Surely no. But as a skilful physician administers many a sharp pain in order to overcome a deep-seated disease, so the servant of God knew that no temporal calamities were worthy to be named, in comparison with the forfeiture of God's favour. It was to "turn the hearts of the children to the fathers," to bring Israel back to God in weeping, and mourning, and godly repentance, that he asked for judgment, lest Jehovah "should come and smite the earth with a curse."

Having delivered his message, the prophet was commanded to hide himself from the malice of the unrepenting king, and, by withdrawing himself from

the people, augment the calamities about to befal them. The brook Cherith is the place which Jehovah has appointed for His servant, and thither in the spirit of obedience he has gone. Perhaps it is needful for Elijah himself that he should withdraw into private communion with God, after having taken such a position before Israel, lest he should exalt himself, and forget his own nothingness.

But how is the prophet to subsist in such a place, far from the haunts of men, especially when famine is everywhere around? For this his Lord provides. He assures His servant that his wants shall be supplied, though in a way strange to man's expectation. "*I have commanded* the ravens to feed thee there!" Elijah hears; and with this precious promise of God he at once betakes himself to the lonely valley, the sombre glens of which are from this time forth to be his solitary but not cheerless abode.

And here we have seen him; content alike to stand forth as the single champion for God in the face of an apostate nation, and to be laid aside in silence and solitude. Elijah knows that the path of obedience is to the creature the only path of happiness. "This is true in the case of all, but specially so as regards those who stand in the capacity of ministers of the Lord. Such must walk in obedience, if they would be used in ministry. . . . The word of the Lord, and the attentive ear of a servant, are all we need to carry us safely and happily onward."

Yet it is a trial of faith: nothing but strong faith

can support the prophet under such circumstances. The flesh, of course, would rebel; would murmur at the apparent uselessness of spending life there; at the waste of time; at the solitude; at the lack of earthly resources; at the probabilities of famine. The brook Cherith still flows, it is true, but how soon may this be dried up! The ravens daily supply the bread and flesh; but what if the ravens should fail? To this the man of God has but one shield to present: it is faith in the promise: "I have commanded," saith the Lord; and therefore Elijah's eye is not upon the ravens, nor upon the brook, but upon his faithful Lord.

But the lonely residence in the remote ravine of Cherith, if it was a *trial*, was also a great *encouragement* of Elijah's faith. To see, day after day, and month after month, the crystal waters of the mountain stream freshly flowing, when he knew that other streams had long ago been dried up; to look on the green turf of that verdant valley, and inhale the fragrance of its sweet flowers, when, through the whole land besides, the dusty ground was gaping for lack of moisture, and fruit and flowers were not; to see morning by morning the ravens come flapping their sable wings down the narrow valley, and then, having deposited their burden of bread and flesh, depart, to return again in the evening; surely all this must have called forth continual praises, and greatly strengthened his trust in God.

What lessons of the power, love, and faithfulness

of Jehovah must Elĭjah have learned in his peaceful retirement! For more than a year he sojourned at the brook Cherith, sustained thus every day by what we may, almost without a figure, call bread from Heaven! "And who would be without those sweet and holy lessons learned in secret? Who would lack the training of a Father's hand? Who would not long to be led away from beneath the eye of man, and above the influence of things earthly and natural, into the pure light of the Divine presence, where self and all around are viewed and estimated according to the judgment of the sanctuary? In a word, who would not desire to be alone with God,—alone, not as a merely sentimental expression, but really, practically, and experimentally alone:—alone, like Moses at the mount of God; alone, like Aaron in the holiest of all; alone, like our prophet at the brook Cherith; alone, like John in the island of Patmos; alone, like Jesus on the Mount? It is to have self and the world set aside; to have the spirit impressed with thoughts of God and His perfections and excellences; to allow all His goodness to pass before us; to see Him as the great Actor *for* us, and *in* us; to get above flesh and its reasonings, earth and its ways, Satan and his accusations; and, above all, to feel that we have been introduced into this holy solitude, simply and exclusively through the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are some of the results of being alone with God."*

* Life and Times of Elijah, p. 27. (Bath, 1850.)

XI.

THE BROOK KEDRON.

TOPOGRAPHY.

The Valley of Jehoshaphat—Jewish Tombs—Gloomy Ravine—Convent of Mar Saba—Flowers—The Cony.

THE CHASTISEMENT OF DAVID.

His Grievous Fall—The Rebellion of Absalom—Ahithophel—The Weeping King—Sin in Believers.

THE BURNING OF IDOLS.

Israel's Apostasy—Godly Kings of Judah—Asa—Josiah's Reformation.

GETHSEMANE.

The Agony and Bloody Sweat—The Suretyship of Jesus—Resurrection—Present State of the Garden.

We come now to speak of that stream which few Christians will scruple to designate as the most interesting in the world. The Jordan is a far more imposing river; and its history, like that of many other of the Sacred Streams of which these pages treat, is a history of miracle; while no direct miraculous interposition marks the Kedron. Yet, associated as it is with Jerusalem and Gethsemane, with the sorrows of David, and with the agony of Jesus, a halo of radiance encircles the Kedron, that belongs to none other, even of the rivers of Palestine.

Jerusalem is half enclosed by this stream, which, rising about half-a-mile from its north-west corner, winds round the north and east sides of the city, receiving the brook Gihon at the south-east corner, after which it passes off by a precipitous ravine to the Dead Sea. In general it is but the dry bed of a winter-torrent, which is not always filled even during the rainy season. Dr. Robinson's remarks would imply that the presence of water in the ravine is rare; and he considers, that, even in ancient times, it was no more abundant than at present. Mr. Rae Wilson, however, found it in a different condition. When he visited it there appeared to be a regular stream of water in the channel, the ground having been saturated by the autumnal rains; and he states

that it often rushes with great impetuosity. Indeed, the very existence of a bridge over it appears to be a sufficient indication that at particular seasons this brook is with difficulty, if at all, fordable.

The ravine, through the bottom of which the Kedron flows, is at its commencement merely a slight depression between the hill Scopus and the city; which gradually deepens until it becomes a gloomy valley, on one side of which rises the Mount of Olives, and on the other the steep cliffs of Moriah, with its summit crowned by the wall of Jerusalem. This ravine is now commonly known as the Valley of Jehoshaphat; but the application of this name to it seems to be comparatively modern.

The sides of this glen are crowded with innumerable tombs; for this has been from time immemorial the Jewish burying-place. To lay his bones with those of his fathers in the Valley of Jehoshaphat is the dearest ambition of the exiled son of Abraham, for which he is often content to travel from the ends of the earth, and to spend the remainder of his sorrowful days at Jerusalem in poverty and contempt. For in this valley he believes that Jehovah will by-and-by sit in judgment upon the nations, in that great controversy, the issue of which will be that "Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation."

The lower course of the Kedron lies through a gloomy gorge of singularly wild character, which has not often been traced by travellers. Dr. Wilson

says, it is deep, romantic, and desolate throughout. About midway it divides into two branches, leaving a sort of chalky island between them; but these again meet at about a mile distant.

On the very brink of this "fearful and wonderful

THE KEDRON.

ravine," not very far from midway between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, stands the Convent of Mar Saba, said to have been built about the beginning of the fifth century. It consists of "a congeries of erections on different levels, of various forms, and of unequal

altitude, the highest being a watch-tower, and a tower of defence against the Arabs." It contains an establishment of Greek monks, who afford hospitality both to travellers and to the native inhabitants who seek it. The sides of the rugged precipices which form the chasm, running down to an immense depth, are perforated with innumerable caverns, where once thousands of ascetics resided; a sort of troglodyte city. A tradition, probably much exaggerated, is preserved in the convent, that 80,000 of these hermits were massacred by the Saracens!

The remainder of this "horrible ravine" seems to preserve the same character. Captain Lynch entered it from the shores of the Dead Sea, and traversed it upwards to Jerusalem. It is called in its lower course the Valley of Fire; it is shut in, on each side, by high barren cliffs of chalky limestone, which, while they exclude the air, throw their reverberated heat upon the traveller. The torrent-bed is interrupted by boulders, and covered with fragments of stone. "The sight, from the bottom of the ravine, is one well calculated to inspire awe. The chasm is here [in the vicinity of the convent] about 600 feet wide and 400 deep,—a broad deep gorge, or fissure, between lofty mountains, the steep and barren sides of which are furrowed by the winter-rains. The numerous excavations present a most singular appearance." *

* The Dead Sea and the Jordan, p. 387.

Even in this yawning gulf some traces of loveliness are seen. A few fig-trees fringe the bed of the torrent; and gardens, with pomegranate-trees, and a single palm, surround the convent. The lower parts of the ravine presented a few flowers to the last-

THE POMEGRANATE.

mentioned travellers; the scarlet anemone and the purple-blossomed thistle being the principal ones. They mention also the white henbane, the dyer's weed, the dwarf mallow, commonly called "cresses," and the caper plant, believed to be "the hyssop that

springeth out of the wall," the unexpanded flower-buds of which, preserved in vinegar, are used as a condiment with meat.

The locality is remarkable for an interesting animal, the Cony of Scripture, that "feeble folk," that "make their houses in the rocks." It is the *Wabar* of the Arabs the *Hyrax Syriacus* of naturalists, which has been only recently discovered in Palestine; but has now been seen by Dr. Wilson and by Captain Lynch, and by both in this vicinity. The former thus describes his discovery: "When we were exploring the rocks in the neighbourhood of the convent, I was delighted to point attention to a family or two of the *Wabar*, engaged in their gambols on the heights above us. Mr. Smith and I watched them narrowly, and were much amused with the liveliness of their motions, and the quickness of their retreat within the clefts of the rocks when they apprehended danger. We were, we believe, the first European travellers who actually noticed this animal (now universally admitted to be the *Shaphan*, or cony, of Scripture), within the proper bounds of the Holy Land; and we were not a little gratified by its discovery. . . . We climbed up to see its nest, which was a hole in the rock comfortably lined with moss and feathers, answering to the description given of the cony. The specimen thus obtained, when stuffed, I have had the opportunity of examining in England. The preparer of the skin mistook it for a rabbit, though it is of a stronger build and of a

duskier colour, being of a dark brown. It is entirely destitute of a tail, and has some bristles at its mouth, over its head, and down its back, along the course of which there are traces of light and dark shade. In its short ears, small, black, and naked feet, and pointed snout, it resembles the hedgehog." *

THE CONY.

This little animal is one of great interest to the scientific naturalist ; since, notwithstanding its external resemblance to the *Rodentia*, it belongs structurally to a very different order, the *Pachydermata*,

* Lands of the Bible, p. 28. (Edinb. 1847.)

most of the members of which are beasts of a gigantic size; as the elephant, rhinoceros, and hippopotamus. Its dental system almost exactly agrees with that of these vast animals; and its skeleton might easily be mistaken for that of a rhinoceros in miniature. It is named *Shaphan* in Hebrew; and seems now to be known by other names besides that of *Wabar*. The term *Daman* has been used to distinguish it, and Captain Lynch applies to it the uncouth appellation of *Btcddin*.

2 Samuel xv.

SCARCELY any of the ancient saints of God have rendered so valuable services to His Church as David "the sweet psalmist of Israel." His numerous compositions, inspired by the Holy Ghost, full of fervent devotion, have in all ages been dear to the children of God, have stimulated and guided their spiritual affections, and afforded a vehicle for the expression of their prayers and praises. Yet, on the other hand, none have ever inflicted a sorer or more lasting wound on the cause of God than David did in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. The horrible sins into which he fell must have greatly shocked the minds of the godly, have been a serious stumbling-block to the well-disposed and inquiring among the unconverted, and have, even to this day, "given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme,"

as if He were not careful about holiness in His elect. Yet none but the *enemies* of the Lord can ever make such a use of this good man's fall; for his deep and bitter penitence, and the train of heavy chastisements that fell upon him thenceforward, stroke after stroke, sufficiently prove that Jehovah, though He "multiplies to pardon," is yet a jealous God, who cannot look upon iniquity. The death of Bathsheba's child, the defilement of Tamar, the assassination of Amnon, were severe strokes, wounding him in the tenderest part,—his paternal affection; but at length the unnatural revolt of Absalom, and the sad end of that beloved but unworthy son, were more terrible than all.

The standard of rebellion unfurled at Hebron was fast gathering around Absalom the thousands of Israel; so fickle and ungrateful were those over whom God's king had ruled in righteousness: at length Ahithophel, the counsellor and bosom friend of David, with whom "he had taken sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God in company," joined the insurrection. Then David felt it was time for him to leave Jerusalem; for so general was the defection of the people, that he saw no safety except in flight; despairing of being able to maintain his crown, and unwilling to expose the sacred city to the horrors of a siege or a civil war. Doubtless, also, the sense of sin was heavy upon his heart; and, though he knew that the Lord had graciously pardoned the guilt of it, as regarded eternal consequences, yet,

probably, the thought that all this and much more evil was deserved, made him willing to take the low place, and humbly yield to the chastisement, rather than strive for his right.

With a few faithful ones the king leaves the gate of the city where he had reigned for so many years, a disconsolate fugitive; slowly he winds round by the wall, and descends into the valley of Jehoshaphat, the mournful placé of tombs. He comes to the Kedron, and how touching is the scene, described with inimitable simplicity and truth by the Divine pen! "And all the country *wept with a loud voice*, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kedron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness. . . . And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and *wept as he went up*, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, *weeping as they went up*."

Oh! how grievous a thing is sin in a believer! And how much sorrow does it generally entail upon him! even though, for Christ's sake, it is not imputed to him for eternal condemnation. God frequently permits the ungodly to go on in their course of evil till their cup is full, and He removes them to await the righteous judgment of the great day; but, if His own children will walk after the flesh, He *must* chastise them, and make them smart for forsaking Him, even for their own sake, that they may learn how evil a

thing and bitter it is to walk contrary to Him. David doubtless learned in the bitter scene at Kedron to look with more abhorrence on his own vileness; and the people would read in his sad chastisement a solemn lesson, when they saw the anointed of the Lord thus brought low. Let us never so abuse the grace of God as to think that we can sin with impunity, or turn the freeness of salvation into a cloak for licentiousness!

1 Kings XV. 2 Kings XXIII.

THE course of the Hebrew nation, after it had passed its meridian of prosperity and glory under the reign of Solomon, rapidly declined from allegiance to Jehovah. The latter days of that great king were not marked with the brilliancy of his early reign; the lustre that had shone around his character became grievously clouded by apostasy to idols. The two rival kingdoms into which the nation was soon divided, fast sank from bad to worse, until the grossest forms of idolatry were rampant, and abominations were committed greater even than those which defiled the nations round about. But while Israel, which had willingly severed itself from even a nominal adherence to the true religion, was permitted to take its evil course, unredeemed by a single godly king, Jehovah mercifully vouchsafed to Judah many

pious monarchs who, with different degrees of zeal and success, laboured to bring the people back to the paths of obedience to the law of Moses, and to the worship of the living God.

Among the most eminent of these were Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah, in each of whose lengthened reigns idolatry was vigorously put down. It was a work of no small time and labour to search out, collect, and destroy the abominable idols which, through the reign of an apostate prince, had accumulated throughout the land; especially as the populace, whose hearts were "mad upon their idols," not generally sharing in the convictions of the pious king, would doubtless throw every obstacle that they dared to raise in the way of the search. On these occasions of national expurgation it appears to have been the custom to bring the idolatrous symbols, when collected, to the brook Kedron, and to burn them there. Thus, when Asa's grandmother, Maachah, perhaps presuming on her rank and age, persisted in keeping an idol in a grove for herself, Asa degraded her from her queenly rank, and burned her senseless god by the banks of Kedron. And, in Josiah's noble attempt to avert the judgments threatened in the law, by a thorough reformation and a national return to God, he seems to have gone much further than any of his predecessors. He found not only the country generally, but Jerusalem, and even the temple of Jehovah itself, filled with images, groves, high places, hangings, altars, vessels, and

various other instruments and symbols of demon-worship, all of which he searched out with the utmost perseverance, and destroyed. The vessels made for Baal that were in the temple were burned "in the fields of Kedron," and their ashes carried to Beth-el, one of the seats of the calf-worship, that they might be mingled with the dust of the altar and high-place there, and defiled with the burned bones of men. Some of the detestable objects seem to have been formed of stone or marble; these were calcined at the Kedron, and then, having been reduced to powder, were cast on the graves of those who had worshipped them, which lay numerous in the valley around. The altars were beaten down, and the dust and fragments were cast into the brook; and probably the idolatrous symbols made of metal were reduced to powder by a similar process to that by which Moses had destroyed Aaron's golden calf, and the powder strewn on the brook, to be rolled down by the turbid torrent into the Dead Sea,—fit receptacle for the defiled and defiling objects.

But Josiah's efforts, laudable as they were, and acceptable in the sight of God, being made in a sincere zeal for His glory, availed not to turn away the wrath that was denounced upon the nation. The reformation, as regarded the bulk of the people, was compulsory and hypocritical; they still worshipped Baal and Moloch and Ashtaroth in their hearts, and waited only the death of their pious and energetic king to relapse again into open apostasy, which immediately

brought down upon them the haughty Babylonian monarch, who carried them away into captivity.

Matthew xxvi. John xviii.

But Kedron had yet to witness a scene of deeper interest and vaster moment; an incident to which neither heaven nor earth, neither time nor eternity, had ever seen a parallel. Across its torrent-bed the weary feet of Jesus passed, pressed by such sorrow as David never knew; and on its shaded banks lay the Brightness of the Father's glory, prostrate on the earth, as "a worm and no man," while the unutterable agony of His soul wrung from His body "great drops of blood falling to the ground."

All was peace and loveliness around; Gethsemane's turf was redolent with the fragrance of spring; the paschal moon, in full-orbed brightness, shone sweetly through the glistering leaves of the hoary olive-trees; the night-breeze broke not the slumbers of the three disciples, who slept all unconscious of their blessed Master's agony: but He was battling with the invisible powers of darkness, and winning, in strife, and groans, and blood, the victory for His redeemed Church. But there was more than bodily anguish, more than mental sorrow, more than the power of Satan, in that cup of bitterness which the Holy One of God was now called to drink. It was the fearful burden of imputed sin, and the dreadful wrath of God

which was its righteous desert. For the ever-blessed Jesus, Jehovah manifested in flesh, sustained the character of our Surety; in man's nature He was now bearing man's sin; our iniquity was laid upon Him; it was exacted, and He was made answerable.* Thus He, who was the Holy, Harmless, Undefiled, Separate from sinners, in whom the Father had declared that He was well pleased, was treated as a sinner. He stood of His own voluntary will in the sinner's stead; and thus it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, and to put Him to grief, that we, the guilty, might go free. Jehovah's sword awoke and smote Jehovah's Fellow, that out of His wounds and death we might get life; even His own life in resurrection. God had determined to spare poor hell-deserving sinners, and therefore He spared not His own Son!

Our all-perfect, spotless Surety declined not the work which He had undertaken; bitter as was the cup of woe, He drank it to the very dregs. It is our joy to know that the mighty work was completed; that what He began in Gethsemane He finished at Calvary, to the entire satisfaction of eternal justice. He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, a full assurance of which blessed fact God hath given in that He hath raised Him from the dead. The presence of Jesus, in resurrection life, at the right hand of God, gives peace to the guilty conscience, because it tells that the guilt which was laid upon the

* Isa. liii. 7, Bishop Lowth's Translation.

Surety is upon Him no more; He has left it behind Him,—buried for ever in His grave.

Dear reader! have you ever by faith seen your part in this astonishing transaction? Can you look on Jesus as bearing *your* load of guilt in the garden and on the cross? And can you look up with joy to the heavenly glory, and behold Him there as *your* risen living Head? If not, may it be your privilege to find Him, even the Crucified, in these simple pages!

It may be interesting to trace the present state of the garden where the Lord Jesus sustained His agony. Every traveller to Jerusalem visits it, of course, and every writer describes it. We abridge the note of Dr. Robinson on the hallowed spot: "Passing down the steep hill from the gate of St. Stephen into the valley of the Kedron, and crossing the bridge over the dry water-course, . . . near the bridge, on the right, is the place fixed on by early tradition as the site of the Garden of Gethsemane. It is a plot of ground nearly square, inclosed by an ordinary stone wall. . . . Within this inclosure are eight very old olive-trees,* with stones thrown together around

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* Chateaubriand's argument respecting the age of the olive-trees in Gethsemane is ingenious. He infers that they must be at least as old as the fall of the Eastern Empire, because the Turks, at the conquest, laid a tax of *one medine* on every olive-

their trunks. There is nothing peculiar in this plot to mark it as Gethsemane ; for adjacent to it are other similar inclosures, and many olive-trees equally old. . . .

"Giving myself up to the impressions of the moment, I sat down here for a time alone, beneath one of the aged trees. All was silent and solitary around ; only a herd of goats were feeding not far off, and a few flocks of sheep grazing on the side of the mountain. High above towered the dead walls of the city, through which there penetrated no sound of human life. It was almost like the stillness and loneliness of the desert."*

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tree then growing, while every olive-tree raised since that time is taxed at half its produce. Now, he states that the eight olive-trees of Gethsemane are charged only the *one medine* each.

* Bibl. Res. vol. i. p. 345.

XII.

THE POOL OF SILOAM.

THE BLIND RESTORED TO SIGHT.

A Pool and a Brook—The Subterranean Channel—The Exploring Travellers.

John IX.

THOUGH at first sight the reader might suppose that this "Pool" could not with propriety be numbered among "Rivers," the objection would vanish when he learned that the waters so designated run off in a little brook from the Pool to the Kedron, and that, before they accumulate in the reservoir, they have already run a course of one-third of a mile. Thus it is not without reason that our great poet sings of—

> "Siloa's brook that flowed
> Fast by the oracle of God."

In the Old Testament we find it alluded to in its twofold character; for Nehemiah mentions "the Pool of Siloah, by the king's garden," and Isaiah speaks of "the waters of Shiloah that go softly."

It was to this pool that the Lord Jesus sent the man born blind, in order that by washing in its waters he might receive his sight,—a miracle that evoked the malice of the Pharisees, and elicited from the poor uneducated man so bold and unanswerable a testimony to the Divine mission of his Benefactor. But his testimony only brought down upon himself the ban of those false shepherds who cast him out, and thus threw him into fuller

fellowship with his already rejected Lord, the true Shepherd of the sheep. He had *gone before*, leading His own sheep out; and this was one of the poor blind ones who had received light and healing from the Good Shepherd, and found his truest joy in following Him.

The Pool of Siloam is a deep reservoir, situated at the mouth of the Tyropœon Valley, into which the water flows from a basin a few feet above it. The superfluous water runs off along the base of Ophel, through a narrow rocky channel, to the terraced gardens in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, where it is expended by being led into a multitude of artificial channels for the purpose of irrigation; else its natural course would lead it into the bed of the Kedron. About 1,100 feet above the pool is a fountain, called the Fountain of the Virgin, which tradition has long represented as the source of Siloam. Professor Robinson and Mr. Smith had the satisfaction of proving the correctness of this belief; for they actually groped their way through the subterranean passage which connects these reservoirs, entering at one and emerging at the other, a distance of 1,750 feet, owing to the tortuous direction of the course. In some parts they could proceed only by crawling on their hands and knees, or by lying at full length and dragging themselves along on their elbows. One cannot sufficiently admire the courage which enabled them to perform such a feat. The passage has been artificially hewn

through the solid rock; and it was probably made in order to convey the water into the city at a time when one of the extremities was included within the wall.

The water in the fountain has an unaccountable irregularity in the flow, sometimes rising a foot or more in five minutes, and then soon returning to its former level. The water is sweetish, and has a peculiar taste, which, however, does not impair its agreeableness or wholesomeness.

POOL OF SILOAM.

XIII.

THE RIVER KISHON.

TOPOGRAPHY.

The Plain of Esdraelon—Its Fertility—Mount Tabor—View from its Summit—Endor and Nain—The Transfiguration—The Excellency of Carmel—Scriptural Allusions—The Kishon—The Bay of Acre—Tyrian Purple.

DEBORAH AND BARAK.

The Canaanites—Cruel Bondage—Prophetic Ministry—Zebulun and Naphtali—Sisera and his Host—The Rout—The Swollen River—The Death of Sisera—Jael's Justification—Faithfulness to God.

THE PROPHETS OF BAAL.

Elijah's Emergence—The Assembly at Carmel—The Challenge—Baal's Inanity—The Altar of God—The Evening Sacrifice—The Fire from Heaven—The Execution of the Seducers—Rain—An Appeal.

THE mountains of Galilee are separated from the hills of Samaria by a great plain, celebrated in all ages for its size, its fertility, and its historical associations. In ancient times it was called the Plain of Megiddo, and sometimes the Valley of Jezreel, though this term appears to have been strictly applicable only to its eastern outlet. The Greeks called it the "great" or "mighty plain;" and in later times it has been designated the Plain of Esdraelon, which is only another form of Jezreel. It is about thirty miles long, from east to west, and eighteen wide from north to south. It is girded round by mountains: on the north are the mountains of Galilee; on the north-east and east are Tabor, the Little Hermon, and the mountains of Gilboa; on the south are the rising slopes and hills of Samaria; while on the west, stretching far away towards the north, lies the long elevated ridge of Carmel, terminating at length in a bold promontory whose foot is bathed in the Mediterranean.

The exuberant fertility of this great plain has been renowned in all ages. The soil is very deep and rich, its basis being a dark basalt impregnated with iron, forming a black earth very similar to that of the cotton districts of India; this runs to the depth of three feet, and rests on a substratum of gravel and

limestone. It is not perfectly level, but forms a series of gentle undulations. If it were well cultivated, it is supposed that it could supply the whole of Galilee with corn, if that province were as populous as it was of old. As it is, it affords corn, wine, and oil, and abundance of pasture. Some travellers speak of it as an immense surface of corn, the waves of which, under the breeze, resemble the agitation of the sea. Others call it a vast meadow covered with the richest pastures. Doubtless both arable and pasture land is found, and travellers speak of the parts which they have themselves passed through.

Two of the mountains that overlook this noble plain require particular notice,—they are Tabor and Carmel. The former is a very marked and prominent object, standing up singly from the plain; but its appearance varies in different aspects. From the north it has the form of a segment of a sphere, appearing beautifully wooded on the summit; from the west it is a cone with the top cut off; and looks much loftier and steeper, with the south side destitute of trees. The approach to it from the north is through a wide and shallow wady, regularly wooded with fine oaks, more like the entrance to a nobleman's domain than a wilderness. The sides and summit of the mountain are also wooded with various trees, among which the oak and the wild pistachio are most numerous. Its height is about 1,000 feet; the top, which forms a little plain, encircled by an ancient wall, has been cultivated, but

now it is become a table of rich grass and wild flowers, which send forth a most delightful fragrance. During the forepart of the day, thick clouds commonly rest upon it, concealing the verdant crown from the plain.

Mr. Bonar, who with his honoured companions climbed the mountain, thus describes the interesting scene that presented itself from the summit:—

"The sun had just disappeared; but we had still light enough to see the chief points of the magnificent landscape. We climbed up upon the ruins of the old fortifications on the south-east corner, which appeared to be the highest point of the summit, and looked around. To the north and north-east we saw the plain over which we had travelled, the height of Huttin, and the deep basin of the mountains inclosing the Sea of Galilee. Other travellers have seen a part of the lake; this we did not observe, but the hills of Bashan, steep and frowning, appeared quite at hand. To the west and south-west lay the largest part of the great plain of Esdraelon, bounded by the long ridge of Carmel, and watered by the full-flowing Kishon, making its way through it toward the Mediterranean. To the south and immediately in front of us, was the graceful range of Little Hermon, and behind it the summit of Mount Gilboa. Between us and Hermon lay stretched that arm of the plain of Esdraelon which encircles Tabor, beautifully variegated with immense fields of thistles and wild flowers, giving the whole plain the appearance of a carpeted

floor. How great must have been its beauty, when its wide open surface was adorned with thriving villages planted amidst fields of waving grain and gardens of blossoming fruit-trees, and closed in by the fertile hills that gird its horizon! At the foot of Hermon, Mr. Calman pointed out to us *Endor*, where Saul went to consult the woman who had a familiar spirit, on the last night of his unhappy career; and a little way to the west of it the village of *Nain*, still marking the spot where Jesus raised the widow's son to life.

"It was easy now to understand why Tabor had been so often made a place of rendezvous from the days of Barak and downward; the hill being so commodious a place of defence, with a copious supply of water on the very summit, even when the enemy spread themselves on the plain below. From our tent-door we saw across the plain the villages of Endor and Nain, at the foot of Little Hermon. Endor lies under the brow of the hill, and Saul would have an easy road from it to the fountain of Jezreel at the foot of Gilboa where his army was encamped. Nain is further west, and appears to lie still closer under Hermon. We observed cultivated fields and verdure around it; and it was here that Mr. Calhoun, our American friend whom we met at Alexandria, found many tombs cut out of the rock, one of which may have been the intended sepulchre of the young man whom Jesus met, as they carried him out dead, and restored to the weeping widow. Jesus must have

known this spot well, for He would often pass it on His way to the Lake of Galilee. No place in all this land furnishes more remarkable illustrations of the sovereignty of God than do these two villages. At Endor you see a king, in the anguish of despair consulting with a diviner, and warned by the dead that the Lord had departed from him and become his enemy. But on the same plain, a few miles from Endor, a thousand years after, you see at Nain, 'God over all,' coming in our nature, and wiping away the tears of a poor widow." *

At the opposite extremity of the plain, Carmel rears his lofty head, looking over the blue expanse of the Mediterranean towards the setting sun. It is the bold termination of a straight mountainous ridge, about eight or ten miles long, and in its loftiest part nearly 1,500 feet high. "Carmel is no place," observes Mr. Carne, "for crags or precipices or rocks of the wild goats; it is the most beautiful mountain in Palestine, in many parts covered with trees and flowers. Though neglected, the sides are very fertile, and capable of producing the fruits of the earth in great profusion. The fruits, though gathered from wild stocks, are sufficiently excellent to show what they would be if well cultured. On the summit a vast number of kine, sheep, goats, antelopes, hares, rabbits, partridges, and other kinds of animals feed,

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* Narrative of a Mission to the Jews, pp. 300, 302. (Edinb. 1843.)

all excellent in their kind, because they find abundant nourishment. The air is always cool and refreshing, however sultry the plains may be.

Through the magnificent plain of Esdraelon flows the Kishon, the most important river of Palestine to the west of the Jordan. It has its remotest source on the south-west side of Mount Tabor, whence it flows in a winding course, with a general westerly direction to about the middle of the plain. It here receives

THE KISHON.

a considerable branch, coming from the south and east, and then pursues a north-west course till it discharges itself into the Mediterranean, at the very foot of Carmel. Some eight or ten miles before its discharge, it is joined by a large stream from the north and east; and from the sides of Carmel a number of torrents pour down into it, in the rainy season, a great volume of water. Hence, at such time it overflows its banks, and acquires a great impetuosity, carrying

everything before it. The higher parts of the river appear to be dried up in summer; but in its lower course the Kishon is a permanent stream, even in the driest seasons, pouring into the sea a body of water about thirty yards wide, and of too great a depth to be forded. It is at present called the Mukutta.

Judges IV.

DURING the fourscore years of rest that the southern tribes of Israel enjoyed after their deliverance from Eglon, the king of Moab, the northern portions of the land were grievously oppressed by the remnant of the Canaanites. Through unbelief and sloth, Israel had neglected to complete the extermination of the wicked nations whom Jehovah had solemnly devoted to utter destruction; and had allowed them to remain, supposing that they could never recover any power to molest them, though God had expressly warned them that these idolatrous tribes would prove "snares and traps unto them, scourges in their sides, and thorns in their eyes." And they quickly proved, by miserable experience, the folly of their negligence. Under the administration of a vigorous king, the northern Canaanites had gradually but rapidly concentrated their power, until they were able to reduce into bondage the whole of Galilee, and to hold in awe the middle portion of the land, and the region beyond Jordan. The name of the Canaanitish monarch was

Jabin, and the metropolis of his kingdom was Hazor, near the lake of Merom, where, a hundred years before, Joshua had gained a glorious victory over another king Jabin, probably the ancestor of him who now reigned. A mighty army was the engine of his oppressive power, commanded by Sisera, an able and renowned warrior, whose force is significantly intimated by the fact that he had nine hundred of those "chariots of iron" which had struck such terror into the Israelites. Twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel, who were subjected not only to the exactions of the government, but to the tyrannies and wanton cruelties of extortionate subordinates and the brutal soldiery. This we learn from Deborah's triumphal song, in which she feelingly alludes to the terror that had prevailed. The highways were unoccupied because of the robberies and violence that were practised there with impunity. The villages and unfortified towns were deserted, neither life nor property being secure. Those who were necessitated to journey from one city to another were in the utmost jeopardy, and were fain to steal along the lanes and by-ways. To venture outside the gates was perilous; even the maidens who resorted to the wells for the daily supply of water were made a mark for the arrows of the cruel archers. To these insults no effectual resistance could be offered, for the people had all been compelled to deliver up their arms, and scarcely a single shield or spear could be found among forty thousand, where

a little while before every able-bodied man had been a warrior.

Meanwhile, Israel stupidly sought to idols who could not save, and "chose new gods" equally powerless,—forgetful of God that made them, and lightly esteeming the Rock of their salvation. "How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up?" At length, however, they cried unto Jehovah, always ready to forgive, and He raised up for them a deliverer, such an one as they little expected, in the person of a woman.

Under a palm-tree in the south of Mount Ephraim, dwelt, in a lowly habitation, Deborah the prophetess. She "judged Israel;" for the law of God at the priests' mouth had long ceased to have any weight, and the priests themselves seem to have become as degenerate as the people. An irregular ministry was then raised up of judges and prophets, and Jehovah was pleased to put honour upon instruments which the law had not at all recognised. At the Divine command she sent for Barak, a man of Naphtali, and commissioned him to gather ten thousand men out of his own tribe, and of his brethren of Zebulun, and to march to the banks of the Kishon; engaging, in the name of Jehovah, that Sisera and the mighty Canaanitish host should be delivered into his hand.

Accompanied by the prophetess herself, without whom he refused to undertake the perilous enterprise, Barak returned to his city, Kedesh, and blew his

trumpet. Ten thousand men quickly responded to the call, though inadequately armed, and unused to resistance. "Zebulon and Naphtali were a people that jeopardied their lives unto the death in the high places of the field," and thus became the instruments of national deliverance, and were honoured by approving mention in the inspired words of the Holy Spirit of God. With the eye of an able general, Barak discerned the strong position which Mount Tabor afforded his little band, and quickly entrenched himself in its fastnesses, where the iron chariots of Canaan would be unavailing. But the battle that day was to be Jehovah's; and He saveth not with sword and spear, nor by skilful generalship, nor by the strength of military position, nor by the multitude of an host. The victory was to be obtained in the plain, where the immense host would have full room for their evolutions, and where the terrible iron chariots would have their utmost advantage, that thus the honour might redound wholly to Jehovah. So, in spiritual things, "we have the treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

The redoubtable Sisera hears with mingled anger and contempt of the revolt, and draws his mighty army to the plain of Jezreel, not doubting that the feeble band will be surrounded and cut to pieces without the least difficulty, and that a fresh occasion will be given for enriching the oppressors with the spoil of the vanquished. The myriads of the Canaan-

itish hosts almost cover the plain; the measured tramp of the prancing cavalry resounds like distant thunder; and the wheels of the mailed chariots cut the enamelled turf in a thousand lines.

Deborah looks upon the swarming hosts, glittering in all the pomp and pride of martial array; and, as she gazes on the idolatrous ensigns waving in the breeze, she pronounces their doom in the name of the Lord God of hosts. "Up!" she exclaims to Barak, "for this is the day in which Jehovah hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: Is not Jehovah gone forth before thee?" At once, without waiting for the assault, the faithful band pours down from the wooded heights of Tabor, and rushes upon the Canaanitish army. Panic-struck, the innumerable host wavers, yields, and flees in dismay; "the stars in their courses fight against Sisera," for a violent tempest of rain and hail, beating full upon his army, increases the confusion. The soldiers, wild with terror, bury their swords in each other's hearts; riderless horses are plunging madly over the plain, and the iron chariots are dashed the one against the other. The rout is complete. Thousands on thousands who have escaped the sword of Barak are fleeing across the plain, pushing with terrified energy to cross the Kishon. But, alas for them! the tempest of rain and hail that smote the army has swollen the river; and its banks are full to the brim with a hoarse and turbid torrent swiftly rushing to the sea. They have no time to deliberate; behind them are pressing

Barak's ten thousand, flushed with victory. No quarter is given; the avenging steel falls without mercy, and fast mows down the terror-stricken throng. They plunge by thousands into the stream; but the boiling waters sweep them away in many a furious eddy, and few of that mighty host succeed in reaching the opposite shore.

The renowned Sisera himself relinquished the dangerous conspicuousness of his ornamented chariot, and fled away on foot. But he escaped the sword of Barak only to fall ignominiously by a woman's hand. The encampment of Heber, the Kenite, a descendant of the father-in-law of Moses, who had cast in his lot with the people of God, lay in his course; and here the fainting general hoped to obtain refreshment and security. Heber seems not to have been at home; but his wife Jael, apparently in perfect sincerity, proffered him the sanctuary of her own private tent. He gladly availed himself of the welcome hospitality, and, overcome with fatigue and chagrin, was soon fast asleep. Then, actuated by a Divine impulse, obedience to which overcame all feminine fear and reluctance, and all the claims of hospitality, the pious Jael smote the enemy of God and of His people with one of the sharp iron tent-pins, and thus slew him.

To attempt to justify the action of Jael by "the usages of ancient warfare, of rude times, and of ferocious manners," is most futile. There can be no doubt that, in that age and country, the act, if judged by common rules, would have been as abhorred as

such an act would be now. But Jael's defence, nay, her glory, rests on very different principles. She was doubtless actuated by the Spirit of God, resistance to Whom would have been grievous sin. It is unjust to impute to her an interested desire to win the favour of the victors; and surely it is dishonouring to the Holy Ghost to call that, as some have done, a "treacherous and cruel murder," for which He has handed down her name, enshrined in His sacred Word, as "Blessed above women."

So, in the dreadful apostasy of the golden calf in the wilderness, when faithfulness to God required the execution of a severe justice, "every man upon his son, and every man upon his brother," the sons of Levi at once sacrificed all private affection, and inflicted the punishment. Thus that tribe "said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children," and obtained an eminent approval and blessing from the Spirit of God. And the Christian is often called to choose between obedience to God, and the gratification of natural affection or the conventional usages of the world; and, if he prefer walking with God to "knowing any man after the flesh," he will often be condemned and vilified here. But it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment: the approbation of Him who knows the secrets of the heart will more than make amends. Yet it is a matter of thankfulness that our testimony against evil, and our witness for God, are not, in the present

dispensation, of the same bloody nature as they often were in former times. Our zeal should be manifested against the *sins*, and not against the *persons* of sinners: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

1 Kings xviii.

THE banks of the rolling Kishon witnessed, ages afterwards, another example of holy but bloody service to God. It was the slaughter of Baal's prophets by Elijah.

Three years and a-half the servant of God had now lived in retirement, while the horrors of drought and famine were fulfilling the Divine purposes of chastisement upon Israel. The brook Cherith, that for a long time had refreshed the lonely ravine, had at length dried up; but God's care for His faithful servant had not failed. He had provided sustenance in the house of a poor widow of Zidon, whose scanty pittance was miraculously increased to support herself and her honoured guest. "A handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse," were all that she possessed; but for more than two years these continued to afford food to that household, until the Lord sent rain upon the earth."

But at length Jehovah intimated to His servant that He was about to remove the terrible infliction which He had so long imposed on His sinning people. Neither Ahab nor his subjects seem to have been

at all softened by the chastisement; they smarted and groaned under its severity, but cried not unto the Lord. Baal's prophets were still as numerous as ever; and, though all their sacrifices and incantations could not avail to procure one drop of rain, the besotted people did not withdraw their allegiance from the mute and helpless idol. But, for the honour of His holy name, Jehovah determined to make a public trial of strength between Himself and Baal, that by a papable manifestation of His power, in signal contrast with the inanity of the idol, they might be persuaded to see the folly of their apostasy.

Elijah leaves his retirement to show himself to Ahab, as cheerfully obedient to the command of God, as when, at the same word, he secluded himself from public notice. In the calm and holy elevation of communion with God, he confronts the wicked king, and boldly charges upon him the guilt of the nation's sins. The monarch trembles under the prophet's frown, and dares not refuse the challenge which Jehovah throws down to the herd of Baal's prophets. All Israel must be gathered to Carmel, to witness the great drama to be enacted on its sloping side; for thither too must be dragged the unwilling servants of Baal, well knowing how hopeless is their cause, yet unable to evade or decline so fair a proposal.

The assembly is gathered: the thousands of Israel are thronging the plain, gazing with eager upturned faces toward the green sides of Carmel, that rise before them like an immense amphitheatre. There,

on the slope, stand with anxious countenances four hundred and fifty men in priestly robes, the prophets of Baal; and, at a little distance, alone, but serene and confident, stands Elijah in his hairy mantle. The Lord knows seven thousand secret faithful ones in Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal; but not one had boldness to stand out as His witness; and not one is found willing to take his place by Elijah's side in this day of decision.

He comes forward and addresses the multitude; and every sound is hushed as his solemn words fall upon their ears. He demands that they should make their election: "If Jehovah be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him!" and then he thus enunciates the terms of the challenge: "I, even I only, remain a prophet of Jehovah; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let *them* choose one for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of Jehovah, and the God that answereth by fire, let Him be God." The justice of the proposition is instantly acknowledged, and the shout that at once ascends from the throng below, "It is well spoken," convinces the reluctant devotees of Baal that they have no alternative but to accept the challenge, or at once to confess the impotency and worthlessness of their idol.

All day long the false prophets have been calling on their god with incessant vociferation. Maddened by the irony of Elijah, they have been leaping around and upon their altar, crying with frantic vehemence, "O Baal! hear us!" Their bodies are covered with their own blood, from self-inflicted wounds, in the vain hope to propitiate their demon with suffering. But all in vain: there is no voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regard their cries. And now the sun approaches his bed in the western sea, which lies stretched out like a mirror of burnished brass to receive him; when Elijah thinks it time to act his part. He calls the people to approach, that they may more distinctly witness what he is about to do. Then he takes twelve stones, and with them builds an altar to Jehovah; thus recognising the unity of God's chosen people, the twelve tribes of Israel, notwithstanding the divisions and schisms that apostasy had made. Elijah has communion with the mind of God, and can still, in faith, regard all Israel as but one, overlooking the sinful breaches of unity, and having regard to the eternal purposes of grace which have decreed that, by-and-by, "one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all."* So now, the scribe instructed unto the things of the kingdom of heaven, cannot but regard the schisms and divisions

* Ezek. xxxvii. 22.

of the Church of God as "carnal"; remembering the dying prayer of Him who gave His life for her, "*that they all may be* ONE."

The people look on with wonder while the prophet digs a deep trench round about the altar which he has made; but they quickly discern the reason for it. For when the bullock is slain and laid on the wood, he commands the whole to be deluged with water, that no suspicion of concealed fire may be entertained. Vessels are quickly carried down to the Kishon's brink, filled, and emptied on the sacrifice, until not only the whole is saturated, but the trench itself is filled to the brim.

The sun is near its setting: it is the moment when, in the magnificent temple at Jerusalem, the priests are offering the evening sacrifice; and Elijah, whose act of worship is in full communion with theirs, draws near, and offers a solemn appeal to the God of Israel. In a moment the fire descends from heaven, consumes the sacrifice, the wood, even the very dust and the stones, and licks up the water that filled the trench. The whole of the mighty multitude fall prostrate on their faces, and, with self-abasement for their besotted infidelity, renounce their apostasy. "Jehovah, He is the God! Jehovah, He is the God!"

Evil must now be judged and put away, that the national reformation may be effectual. The wicked prophets of Baal, the teachers of apostasy, the seducers to idolatry, may not be permitted to escape;

the law had pronounced their doom to be *death*, and Elijah shrinks not from executing the sentence. The now penitent people are ready, in obedience to his command, to take them; neither Ahab nor Jezebel dares to move a finger in their behalf; they are dragged from their untouched sacrifice to the brink of Kishon, and put to death; and their bodies are hurled down on its rushing tide, to find a living grave in the maws of sea-monsters.

There now remains no hindrance to the outpouring of the Divine blessing. Idolatry has been publicly renounced, Baal put to an open shame, and the ring-leaders in iniquity have received condign punishment. The curse of drought is now taken away, and, before Ahab can reach Jezreel, the heavens are black with clouds and wind, and heavy rain refreshes once more the parched and barren earth.

With how much truth and force might the appeal of Elijah be presented to thousands in this land! "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him!" How many there are who acknowledge the claims of God upon their souls' attention, whose hearts are yet set upon the world! But, "if the Lord be God, follow Him!" He will not be content with a divided homage: "My son! give me thine heart!" is His language. If Jesus be the only Saviour, come to Him, cleave to Him, accept Him for time and for eternity, and abjure all dependence upon any other. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

XIV.

THE BROOK OF ELAH.

DAVID AND GOLIATH.

Wady es Sŭmt—The Acacia—The Terebinth—The Philistines—The Gigantic Champion—Faith—The Sling and Stone—The Death of the Giant—Jesus and Satan—The Spiritual Conflict.

1 Samuel xvii.

THE valleys, or wadies, of the hilly parts of Palestine frequently receive in their courses other tributary wadies; each of which is perhaps formed by the confluence of several smaller ones. And as each is the bed of a torrent during the rainy season, the rivulets uniting, continually augment the size and volume of the stream, in proportion to the number of tributary wadies that have united. One of the vales thus opening into the Wady Surar, the ancient Valley of Sorek, is the Wady es Sŭmt, or the valley of the Acacia-tree, which is itself formed by the junction of three others, viz., Wady el Musŭrr, from the east, Wady es Sŭr, a large valley from the south, and a small one unnamed, from the north. The name of the valley so formed is derived from the prevalence of the thorny tree that produces the gum-arabic (*Acacia Arabica*), a great number of which grow in the western part. This is a moderately sized tree, with peculiarly elegant leaves, composed of many pairs of shining leaflets. The bases of the branches are armed with strong sharp thorns that grow in pairs. The flowers are like little golden balls, hanging gracefully among the leaves in threes, and giving forth a fragrant perfume. Like other trees that produce tasteless gums, the bark is highly austere and

astringent to the taste. The gum-arabic is procured by wounding the bark, or by natural exudation; the sap flows out and hardens in transparent lumps, very similar to that of our cherry-tree. It is eaten throughout the East, especially by those who traverse the deserts, as it contains much nutriment in very small bulk. The timber of this tree is supposed to have been the "Shittim-wood," which was so largely used in the construction of the tabernacle and its furniture.

The bottom of the valley is a fine fertile plain, with moderate hills on each side; it is covered with fields of grain, except where the acacia-groves are found; and the hill-sides are clothed with thriving olive plantations, in which the trees are planted in regular rows like an orchard. This valuable tree is extensively cultivated in this part of the country, to which the numerous groves impart quite a wooded appearance.

The road from Askelon to Jerusalem anciently passed through the head of this wady; but it is now scarcely ever trodden by European feet. Professor Robinson visited it, and mentions the primitive simplicity and hospitality that remain among the inhabitants, not yet spoiled by intercourse with foreigners.

This eminent biblical geographer considers the Wady es Sŭmt to be the ancient valley of Elah, in which David slew the giant Goliath. The word Elah signifies the terebinth-tree, the *butm* of the modern Arabs; and this appellation was probably given to

it from some remarkable tree of this species, as its present name expresses the abundance of trees of another kind. It is interesting to remark, that the largest terebinth seen by Professor Robinson, in all Palestine, was an immense tree, still standing in the Wady es Sûr, a little above the point where it opens into the Wady es Sŭmt. Through the bottom runs in winter "the brook," out of which the shepherd youth chose the five smooth stones for his weapons; just such pebbles as might now be picked up from its bed, rolled by the action of the torrent. About the middle of May the American travellers found it dry.

In the early history of Israel as a nation, their most indomitable, persevering, and successful enemies were the Philistines. The reign of Saul was almost a continual conflict with these foes, in which they appear generally to have maintained the upper hand. At his accession, the southern portion of the land was commanded by their garrisons, and after a reign of forty years, he met his death on the field of battle in the moment of their victory.

But Israel too had some brilliant successes, won not so much by valour or numbers, as by the living faith, which laid hold on Jehovah as the rightful King of the nation, and brought-in His almighty power to the conflict. Whenever this can be done victory is sure, no matter how many, how subtle, or how strong the adversaries who oppose us.

On one occasion the hostile armies were encamped

on the two opposite hills that overlooked the little valley of Elah. Frequent skirmishes had occurred, but neither party seemed inclined to venture on a decisive engagement. According to a custom not uncommon in ancient warfare, when victory often depended on the personal strength and prowess of the combatants, a champion had presented himself from the Philistine army, offering to decide the battle by single combat with any opponent that the Israelitish army might afford. This challenger was of the ancient race of the Rephaim, and was of gigantic size and strength, being, according to the most moderate computation, upwards of ten feet high, while the weight of his coat of mail (5,000 shekels of brass, or about 156 lbs.) proved his strength to be proportionate to his bulk. Besides this, he wore a helmet of brass, probably of that curious and not inelegant form with which we see Philistine warriors depicted in the ancient Egyptian paintings, representing a circlet of feathers with the points slightly curved outwards. He wore also a gorget of brass between his shoulders, and greaves of the same metal upon his legs. His spear-staff was "like a weaver's beam," and the iron head of his spear weighed nearly twenty pounds. With such endowments of nature and art, it is no wonder that the uncircumcised idolator should consider himself invincible, and defy the armies of Israel, who were however, in truth, "the armies of the living God," though he saw in them only "servants to Saul."

Faith, and that courage which arises from a recognition of God's protecting power, were at a low ebb in Israel; and hence, for forty days, the challenge of this haughty blasphemer filled the whole host with dismay, none venturing to meet him in the field. But, at length, the son of Jesse, though but a stripling of smooth and ruddy countenance, being on a casual visit to the army, felt his spirit stirred and his sense of Israel's shame aroused as he listened to the reproaches of the proud Philistine. "Who," he asked, "is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

Strong in that his might, the faithful youth put his life in his hand, and boldly ventured forth to meet the arrogant challenger. Saul would have arrayed him in his own armour, but David's trust was not in this, and he rejected it. He would show the whole assembled hosts that "Jehovah saveth not with sword and spear, for the battle is Jehovah's;" and therefore he goes down into the vale unarmed, except with a shepherd's staff and a sling. Five smooth stones he chooses out of the gurgling brook that trickles through the bottom, which he puts into a little bag; and this is all the armour, offensive or defensive, that he takes.

The giant stalks on in all the pride of strength, and looks about for his foe. He cannot believe that the fair boy he sees before him can seriously intend to engage in the combat; and with a laugh of contempt at an opponent armed with a staff, he curses David by his gods. The answer of the youthful hero is

replete with humility, faith, zeal for God's glory, and for the honour of Israel. He declares his undoubting assurance that he shall be successful, glories in his own mean appearance, that the honour may be entirely the Lord's, and predicts that the result of the combat will be the spread of Jehovah's fame in the earth.

The combatants approach ; the haughty giant seizes his weapons from his attendant, and strides forward. David runs to meet him, and when he has come near, he takes one of his smooth stones from his bag, and slings it with so true an aim, and with such force, that the missile, striking the Gittite's broad forehead, penetrates bone and brain ; and his huge form falls prostrate on the earth.

Thus the feeblest believer in Jesus may fearlessly meet in conflict the principalities and powers and spiritual wickednesses that are opposed to him, and that gigantic one who is prince of them all. Proudly indeed he wages the war, threatening is his demeanour, bold his assaults, and terrible his weapons ; but a babe in Christ needs not fear him, trusting not in carnal weapons, but in the strength of the Lord of hosts, against whom the blasphemous assaults of the adversary are truly pointed. Jesus has conquered him on his own ground ; He went down into the domains of death, that He might destroy him that had the power of death ; He beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven, and He has given to all His redeemed people to trample under foot " all the power

ot the enemy." May we then ever meet him, assured that with such apparently inadequate arms as a word out of the book of God, a mere stone from a shepherd's scrip, we shall be able, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to overcome him, and lay him low.

XV.

THE BROOK ESHCOL.

THE ISRAELITISH SPIES.

Uncertain Locality—Valley near Hebron—Sorek—The Search—Jericho—Lake of Gennesaret—Lebanon—Galilee—Samaria—Fruitfulness of Judah—Vines—Magnitude of Grapes and Clusters—The Specimen—Modern Testimony—Culture of the Vine.

Numbers XVII.

CONSIDERABLE uncertainty rests upon the situation of the fertile valley from which the spies took their enormous cluster of grapes. Very general tradition, both Jewish and early Christian, has placed it in the vicinity of Hebron. The name of one of Abram's Amoritish friends was Eshcol, who lived at the Terebinth of Mamre, at Hebron; and it has been concluded that the beautiful vale received its name from him. But the Word of God expressly states that the place was called the Brook Eshcol (which signifies a cluster of grapes), because of the cluster which the children of Israel cut down from thence.

The valley to which we allude stretches away towards the north-west from Hebron, and the high-road from that city to Jerusalem passes through it. The pathway is paved with large uneven stones, like the roads in the Swiss mountains; it is bounded by vineyards of the greatest luxuriance, and in a high state of cultivation, well guarded by good stone fences: the soil is rich and abundant. These vineyards produce the best grapes in the whole country. Nor is the fruitfulness of this valley confined to the "choice" and "noble" vine; pomegranates and figs, as well as apricots and quinces, grow there in abundance; and the terraced slopes on either side are

crowned with groves of the graceful and glistening olive.

Others have supposed the Brook Eshcol to have been a tributary of the Sorek; or else that Sorek was the distinguishing name of the valley, and Eshcol that of the brook that flowed through it. This opinion derives considerable weight from the circumstance that the word Sorek signifies the choicest kind of vine; and that this region enjoyed a celebrity for the excellence of its wine; for the "wine of Sorek" of the Scriptures was probably the same as that of which the classic writers make honourable mention by the name of "the wine of Askelon."

The interesting story connected with the valley, is the following. After nearly twelve months' residence in the vicinity of Sinai, where they received the law, the children of Israel spent about five months in journeying from Mount Horeb to Kadesh Barnea, the southern border of Palestine. Here twelve men were selected to spy out the land, that they might bring a report of its character and condition. The office of a spy was, in ancient times, not considered dishonourable, and, being one attended with danger, and requiring courage, skill, watchfulness, prudence, and self-denial, was often undertaken by officers of rank. The Hebrew spies were all of them princes, one from each tribe, who, having received from Moses instructions on the points to which their attention should mainly be directed, entered on their search.

The season was the latter part of summer, for the "time of the first ripe grapes," at which the spies set out on their journey, answers to the month of August. They traversed the whole length of the land, probably first stretching away to the Jordan, and proceeding northward near the course of that river. Here they would see the rich and fertile plain of Jericho, with its groves of beauteous palm-trees, and its fragrant balsams. They would see the charming expanse of the lake of Gennesaret, sleeping in mirror-like brightness among the mountains. They would climb the rugged sides of Hermon and Lebanon; would gaze with curiosity, not unmixed with awe, on the snow that capped their lofty summits; and would admire the forests of mighty cedars that fringed their sides, and filled their valleys,—a sight whose grandeur the scarcity of timber in Egypt and the Desert, and even in the south of Palestine, would enable them to appreciate.

Returning, they would enjoy the striking and ever-changing scenery of the mountainous Galilee, with its mulberry groves and forests of oaks; and would cross the mighty plain of Jezreel, a sea of waving corn. The wheat and the barley indeed would have been mostly gathered in, but the tall maize, and the dourra, and the bearded millet, still awaited the sickle; and, in the neighbourhood of the lakes and low-lying rivers, plantations of rice were beginning to cover large tracts with a refreshing verdure. Tabor, like a huge cone of vegetation, would rise before them,

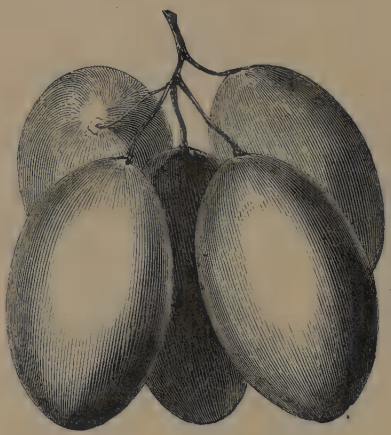
and the glorious Carmel with its crown of flowers. The grassy undulations of what, long afterwards, was the country of Samaria, the pastures of Sharon, and the plains of the coast, with the numberless little rills that everywhere then watered that "land of brooks," would be carefully noticed by men, whose "occupation was that of shepherds." But when they came again to the hill-country of the south, they would surely linger awhile there to explore its fruitful riches. The fruits which attained unrivalled excellence in Palestine were now just come to maturity, and this was the region where they grew in the most rich luxuriance. Orchards of apples and pears were laden with their russet fruit, the juicy hardness of which would be an agreeable novelty to men acquainted with none but tropical productions. Different kinds of plums, peaches, nectarines, and apricots, hung clustering in glowing beauty and fragrance. The scarlet blossoms of the pomegranates had given place to the ruddy-brown fruit; and wide-spreading sycamores were hung with bunches of the luscious figs. The groves of olives, sheeting the slopes of the hills, were filled by the laughing peasants, beating the trees and collecting the valuable produce; and the spies would doubtless admire the changing play of light from the slender leaves, as the agitation continually brought to view the varied surfaces, the dark green of their upper sides contrasting with the silvery grey of the lower. But the extraordinary abundance of the vines, the number and magnitude of

the ponderous clusters, the size and flavour of the grapes, excited their admiring wonder above all; and they determined to carry back to their brethren a specimen cluster, that they might see with their own eyes the goodness of the land. By the Brook of Eshcol they cut down a single cluster of great size; and, in order that the transportation might be effected without injury to the mellow fruit, as well as on account of its great weight, they bore it suspended from a staff, between two men; and brought it in safety, together with other fruits, to their expecting brethren.

Into the other circumstances that attended their return,—the unbelieving fear which, in the hearts of most of their number, had so magnified the power of the Canaanites as to counteract the effect of the excellence of the land, and its sad results in murmuring and rebellion,—we have not space to enter. But we will adduce a few testimonies to show that the exuberant fruitfulness that then marked the "glory of all lands," has not yet wholly departed, though the clime and the soil are withering under the righteous frown of Jehovah.

Dandini, an Italian traveller, observes that the grapes of Lebanon are as large as prunes; and Doubdan writes that, in travelling near Bethlehem, he found a most delightful valley, full of aromatic herbs and roses, and planted with vines of the choicest kind. It was not the time of the vintage, but the inhabitants assured him that they occasion-

ally found clusters weighing ten or twelve pounds. This valley must have been near, if not identical with that commonly considered to be the ancient Eshcol. Reland was assured by a merchant who had resided many years in the same neighbourhood, that he had seen bunches weighing ten pounds. Nau affirms that he had seen near Hebron grapes as large as a man's thumb; and, as to the clusters, some he



GRAPES OF PALESTINE.

had seen in Syria weighed ten or twelve pounds; and he had heard in the Archipelago of some weighing thirty or forty pounds. Neitzschutz declares that he could with truth say, that in the mountains of Israel he had seen and partaken of bunches that were half an ell long, the grapes of which were two joints of a

finger in length. The accompanying engraving from Laborde, gives the exact size of some seen by him.

Sir Moses Montefiore obtained near Hebron a bunch of grapes about a yard in length.

Even in England we have had evidence of the same kind. A bunch of Syrian grapes was grown at Welbeck which weighed nineteen pounds. It was sent as a present from the Duke of Portland to the Marquis of Rockingham ; and was carried to its destination, a distance of twenty miles, *on a staff, by four labourers, two bearing it in rotation.* This cluster was nineteen inches and a-half in diameter ; four feet six inches in circumference ; and nearly twenty-three inches in length.

The mode of cultivating the vine varies much in different countries. With us it is "suffered to expand itself to any size, and nailed in regular lines to the wall, or to the frame of a green-house ; thus a single tree will produce several hundred-weight of grapes. On the banks of the Rhine the growth is limited to three feet in height, and each tree is supported in an upright position. In France it is formed into arches and ornamental alcoves. In Sardinia it assumes the aspect of a parasitical plant, luxuriating among the branches of the largest forest-trees, and clasping with its tendrils the extreme twigs. In Asia Minor its wild festoons hang their green and purple pendants from rural bowers of trellis-work. On the heights of Lebanon it lies in a state of humiliation, covering the ground like the cucumber ; and subsequently we saw

it, in the valley of Eshcol, in a position different from all that have been named. There three vines are planted close together, and cut off at the height of five feet in the apex of a cone formed by their stems; where, being tied, each is supported by two others, and thus enabled to sustain the prodigious clusters for which that region has always been famous; clusters so large, that, to carry one, the spies of Moses were compelled to place it on a stick borne by two men. Each mode is doubtless the best that could be adopted in the quarter where it prevails, considering the nature of the soil and climate, the value of the land, and the object of the cultivation." *

* Elliot's Travels.

XVI.

THE BROOK BESOR.

TOPOGRAPHY.

The River of Egypt—The Desert—The Wild Ass—Cultivation—Paths—Trees—Gaza—Wady Sheriah.

DAVID'S CHASTISEMENT.

God's Anointed King—The Outcast—The Trial of Faith and Patience—Grace—Temptation—Failure—Guile and Falsehood—A Dilemma—Philistine Jealousy—The Sack of Ziklag—Refuge in God—Return to Ordinances—Urim and Thummim—The Ephod—Our High Priest—The Oracle—The Pursuit—The Dying Egyptian—The Rioting Banditti—The Recovery of all—Abundant Spoil—Grace abounding—Participation of Blessing.

GERAR.

The Philistines—Their Origin and Character—High Civilization—Affinity with the Egyptians—Freedom from Idolatry—Abraham's Unbelief and Prevarication—Veils—Jehovah's Faithfulness—Isaac's Failure—The Valley of Gerar—Wells conferring property in Land—Names of Wells—Selfishness and Concession.

1 Samuel xxx.

As the traveller pursues his weary way from Egypt to Palestine, he crosses the broad channel of a river, bounded still by its well-marked banks, but destitute of water. When the rivers of Judah flowed with water, this was the southern boundary of the country, dividing it from the land of Ham, and hence it is often alluded to as "the River of Egypt." On one side is a parched desert of sand, spotted here and there with little verdant patches, where a few bushes of palm-trees grow, and flowers show their smiling faces to the scorching rays of the sun that pour down as if from a glowing furnace; but, in general, dreary, waste, and bare, with nothing to relieve the eye, almost blinded by the glare of the white sand, but occasional heaps of stones, that tell of ruin and desolation. Here and there the flat sands are covered with an incrustation of fine salt, the very symbol of barrenness. The wild ass, whose "house" God has "made the wilderness, and the barren land (*Heb.* the salt places) his dwellings," here ranges, far from the haunts of men, "searching after every green thing."

On the eastern side of this ancient channel, once a considerable river, since it is not less than six hundred feet in breadth, the country changes. Low sand-hills, running in ranges parallel to the shore of the

Mediterranean, which is close at hand, for a while struggle for supremacy with the increasing verdure of grassy slopes and eminences, and with advancing cultivation. Fields of wheat and barley bow in yellow waves to the pleasant breeze; and these are interspersed with green patches of lentiles, or of the tall and vigorous tobacco-plant, with its large leaves and delicate pink blossoms,—a favourite crop with the present Mohammedan occupants. Flocks of sheep and goats are seen scattered over the undulating hills, feeding on the long grass which nearly conceals them, and browsing on the aromatic shrubs; with now and then a herd of asses, and more rarely, of horned cattle. In some places the soil is being turned up by the rude and light plough, drawn by oxen; and the fields, not divided by hedges or walls, have their boundaries marked only by bunches of broom hung up on stakes at intervals. Over the undulating plains the high-road is formed of many paths running side by side but continually merging the one into the other; for it is made by the feet of the animals that travel it, which follow each other; and not, as with us, by a general levelling of the whole width of the road. In the spring, the turf intersected by these many paths is gaily enamelled with flowers, "among which our garden-pink assumes the place of daisies." Many ancient sycamores, with twisted roots and gnarled and knotty trunks, spread out their broad flat heads of foliage towards the rising sun, like huge umbrellas, inviting the weary traveller to pitch his tent beneath

their refreshing shadow; or, at least, to snatch a few minutes' relief from the fierce unclouded glare of the sun. The ever-green and almost ever-living terebinth is now and then seen, with its empurpled foliage, flowers, and fruit; but trees are now scarce, for the curse of barrenness is fallen upon the land of Israel. The wide expanse of the Mediterranean, "the Great Sea," lies sleeping along the horizon on the left, beneath the descending sun; and, to the right, far inland, the prospect is bounded by mountains rising into uneven peaks, the hill-country of Judah.

Fifty miles of journeying through such a country as this brings the traveller to Gaza, an ancient city of the Philistines, situated on a little hill, and surrounded by gardens fenced with impenetrable hedges of prickly-pear, and embosomed in orchards and groves of apricots, mulberries, figs, and sycamores. But a few miles before he reaches this remnant of antiquity, he has had to cross the dry beds of two or three other torrents, the principal of which is called by the Arabs Wady Sheriah. It is about thirty yards wide, inclosed between high steep banks, through which, in winter, the accumulated rains pour a muddy torrent to the sea; but these, early in spring, dwindle to insulated stagnant pools, and soon dry away. Yet its deeply ploughed course remains indelible, and can be distinctly traced from the neighbouring eminences, winding far away inland towards its source in the distant hills of Judah. This is supposed to be the brook Besor, the scene of incidents fraught with interest and

instruction in the memorable history of "the sweet Psalmist of Israel."

David had been anointed, by Divine command, king over Israel; he was God's chosen king; but another king was actually on the throne,—man's chosen,—the son of Kish. It was not God's purpose at once to confer upon the man of His choice the actual administration of the kingdom; He had secured it to him by promise, and now left him for many years to live by faith in the unchangeableness of Jehovah, while the rebellious king was suffered to take his own downward course to sin and ruin. Like the true Anointed and Beloved One, the Christ of God, of whom David was a type, he remained, in the mysterious purposes of God, long excluded from the throne, which was his by right, by him who was a type and representation of the "prince of this world;" while one after another, whose hearts God had touched, went down to him, owning him in his humiliation and rejection, and joining their fortunes with his, in faith upon the security of the Divine promises, and in hope of sharing the honour and joy of the kingdom at the appointed time of exaltation.

Long time the son of Jesse maintained his confidence unshaken in Jehovah; hunted to and fro "like a partridge in the mountains," watched and waylaid, driven from one fastness and stronghold to another, pursued by his cruel and implacable persecutor with a most persevering thirst for his life, he yet strengthened himself upon the Lord his God, and still looked for-

ward to brighter days to come. It was a time of sore trial, a severe discipline in which he was learning in God's school how to rule His people Israel; but it was a time of profit to his soul; many of the sweetest psalms were penned during these "flittings" and hair-breadth escapes, and they breathe the deepest communion with God, such as the saints in all ages have panted to enjoy. Yet, while there is thus revealed to us the habitual sense of God's love and care which David enjoyed, they continually show also the bitterness of the trial which he was enduring; cut off from the ordinances of the sanctuary, and shut out from the congregation; subject to calumnies and reproaches, and liable to hear even the faithfulness of Jehovah impugned; he often mourns in pathetic terms his sorrowful lot, and comforts himself only with the remembrance of the unfailing love and sympathy of his God. "Thou tellest my wanderings; thou puttest my tears into Thy bottle; are they not in Thy book?"

A beautiful example of meekness, and of that grace which returns good for evil, and blessing for cursing, is afforded by David while thus hunted for life. Twice was Saul completely in his power; and he might, without the least danger to himself, have ended in a moment his perils and his sufferings, by cutting off his bitter foe, who alone stood between him and his rightful throne. But it was no part of David's duty to avenge his own cause, or to compass the death of even a wicked king; he was content to

wait until God's time was come, though he knew not how many more years of painful trial might thus be allotted him. Thus the Lord Jesus, "when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously;" and thus too He is well content to wait for the assumption of His kingdom, till the Father's time is come, "expecting, till His enemies be made His footstool."

But we in vain look to the type for the perfection of the Antitype. The faith and patience and suffering grace of Jesus never failed, but those of the son of Jesse gave way under the trial. In an hour of temptation he forgot the promises of the Living God, and gave utterance to the desponding thought, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul!" Instead of rebutting the suggestion as from the father of lies, and staying himself upon the tried faithfulness of Jehovah, he parleyed with the tempter, and the "thought of foolishness" soon brought forth its fruits of actual sin. He had an infallible counsellor with him who would have given him wise and unerring advice if he had asked it; for the high-priest Abiathar was there, with whom was deposited the Oracle of Jehovah, the mysterious Urim and Thummim. But David forgot to inquire of God; and, taking counsel only of his unbelieving fears and worldly prudence, he resolved to seek protection among the enemies of his country and his God, and to cast himself upon the king of the Philistines.

The Gittite monarch received him kindly, and assigned to his distinguished guest the little city of Ziklag, situate not far from the brook Besor, a town which had formerly belonged to the tribe of Simeon, but had been captured by the Philistines in some of the frequent wars, and now came into the possession of Judah by this royal gift to David. Here it would seem at first as if a great change for the better had occurred in the circumstances of the Hebrew band; for they were now delivered from the pressing danger, and provided with a fortified town in which they might dwell in security. But sin always leads to sorrow; and, though the child of God is delivered through grace from the punishment due to sin hereafter, yet God is a jealous God, and will not suffer His saints to abuse His grace, nor to continue to walk contrary to Him, without exercising towards them His fatherly discipline. Thus David found it.

One sin naturally leads to another. The son of Jesse must now ingratiate himself with Achish, whose interests are diametrically opposed to those of Israel; hence a course of deceitfulness, if not of lying, is begun, in which the "man after God's own heart" becomes an object of our sorrow and pity. He makes an inroad upon the nations that lie to the south of the land—the Amalekites and allied tribes—and puts to the sword without distinction all who fall into his hands. In this we will not say he was wrong, for Israel had been solemnly and expressly commanded to "blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under

heaven"; and Saul's failure to execute this commission which had been entrusted to him, had been the occasion of Jehovah's rejecting his kingship, and choosing the son of Jesse. But surely the guile which represented the expedition as having been against his own people, was not only dishonouring to God, to whom lying lips are an abomination, but dishonouring to himself also, as putting him into the position of a renegade, a traitor, and an enemy to the chosen people of Jehovah.

Well; the ready falsehood extricated this Israelite, in whom there ought to have been no guile, from that difficulty; but soon a more formidable one presents itself, for Achish is summoning his armies to a grand assault upon Israel, and counts with confidence upon the assistance of David and his band, who have so vaunted their exploits against what might be reasonably considered the common enemy. Here is a dilemma! If he promise the expected aid, and then fail of performance, or go over to the ranks of Israel, what treachery and ingratitude will mark his conduct! If he be found in the ranks of the Philistines, making common cause with them against his brethren, helping to bring the people of Jehovah under the yoke of the idolators, what a position is this for God's anointed king! Oh! what difficulties and dangers do they plunge themselves into, who endeavour to get rid of trial by turning aside into the apparently smooth and flowery paths of sin! In such circumstances, afar from God, the erring saint

would only become more and more deeply involved in difficulty and sin, if the Lord's own gracious hand, ever stretched forth in watchful love, did not often cut the knot, and lead him back again into uprightness by a way which he had not anticipated.

The natural jealousy of the Philistine lords becomes the channel of help to the distressed David; and the distrusted stranger is sent back to his own town. But his heart is not yet humbled; the plausible falsehood is still maintained; and, though glad in his inmost soul of the relief, he affects great indignation at not being permitted to "go to fight against the enemies of his lord the king." Ah! his safety was dearly bought, at the price of his sincerity; and far more happy, as well as more worthy of our admiration, was the noble-minded fugitive in the caves and rocks of the wild goats, than the insincere sycophant in the court of Gath.

Jehovah had extricated His erring servant from the distressing dilemma in which he had placed himself, not suffering a public disgrace to come upon him, either before Israel or the Philistines. But he must be rebuked and humbled, that he may recover himself out of the snare into which he is fallen; and for this, as continuance in sin has hardened his heart and blunted his conscience, a severe stroke is necessary. He comes with his six hundred men to Ziklag, expecting to enjoy the comforts and amenities of home; each man is anticipating the welcome words and affectionate caresses of his wife and children,

and perhaps hoping to spend a little season in rest and relaxation from the fatigues of martial enterprise. They approach the familiar spot after a three days' tedious march beneath the torrid sun; but an unusual and unnatural silence and solitude prevail. Where are the flocks and herds that ought to be grazing on these hill-sides? Where are the shepherds whose viols were wont to be heard beneath the shade of these sycamores? Why do the ploughs lie idly in these half-ploughed fields, forsaken of man and beast? No barking of household dogs is heard, no busy hum of many voices, no merry laugh of childhood comes over the hill from the town; all is still as death. They press on with palpitating hearts; the foremost are on the summit of yonder intervening eminence, when suddenly they stop, recoil with terror, and send up to Heaven a cry, a wail of anguish. The town is beneath them, but it is a heap of ruins; the red embers are yet lying in the half-fallen houses, and thin columns of smoke ascend from many a smouldering roof. Not a sign of life is there; nor can their search discover any living soul to tell the dismal tale. Some comfort, however, is found in the fact that no traces of blood are seen, no ghastly corpses, no half-consumed bodies, not even a blackened bone can be found; but all—wives, sons, daughters, servants, flocks, herds—all are gone into captivity.

This was a stunning stroke indeed! For a time the voice of bitter lamentation ascended: "David and the people that were with him lifted up their

voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep." Then sorrow began to yield to thoughts of revenge; and, as the unknown enemy was beyond their reach, they angrily began to vent their rage on their commander, to whose imprudence they not unreasonably attributed their irreparable loss; and dark hints were already muttered of stoning him But the lesson had been learned: David recognised the hand of his offended God, and bowed with submission to the stroke. He "encouraged himself in Jehovah his God!"

It is the precious privilege of the child of God that he can find in his Father's bosom a refuge from trouble, not only when the trouble comes upon him in the path of duty, but when it is the result of his own failure. It is comparatively easy to a saint to "encourage himself in the Lord his God," when tribulation, persecution, the loss of comforts, of goods, of liberty, and even of life, are brought on by his faithfulness to his Lord. He naturally then looks up for Divine consolation: but it is equally his privilege, though much more difficult to be exercised, to flee away from the consequences of his own transgression, and take refuge in God's love. Yes! to take refuge even from the chastisements of his Father's hand, in the sympathy of his Father's heart! But only he can do this, who, like David, notwithstanding the darkening cloud, knows well by sweet experience, that "God is love."

The immediate fruit of this severe, but wholesome

discipline was manifested in David by his return to the ordinances of God which he had sinfully neglected. If he had inquired of Jehovah, when he proposed to go down to Achish, he would certainly have been preserved from the entangling and defiling paths into which he had been lately led; and he would have been spared the painful bereavement which had just befallen him. Now, however, he will no more trust his own wisdom, but seek his divine Counsellor.

From that dreadful slaughter of the priests at Nob, when Saul "slew in one day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod," Abiathar, the son of the high-priest, had escaped; and he now exercised the functions of that sacred office. One of those functions was to deliver a solemn oracle from Jehovah to any inquiring worshipper. It was called "the judgment of Urim and Thummim," terms supposed to imply *illumination* and *perfection*; and it could be delivered only by the high-priest, when arrayed in his holy garments of glory and beauty. That portion of the priestly dress which was more immediately connected with the oracular judgment, was the ephod of gold. It seems to have been a short coat or apron, without sleeves, formed of the most costly materials; a sort of rich brocade, made of linen and golden thread interwoven, and gorgeously embroidered with blue, and purple, and scarlet. On the straps, or shoulder-pieces, by which it was suspended, were fixed two large onyx-stones, on each of which were graven the names of six of the tribes of

Israel. A magnificent breastplate was worn in front, called, from its use, the breastplate of judgment. It was a doubled piece of the same rich cloth as the ephod, about nine inches square, fastened with rings and chains of gold to that garment. In it were set twelve precious stones, in four rows, all of them different, and each graven with the name of one of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. Thus the high-priest, whenever he went into the Holiest of all, where Jehovah dwelt in visible glory, bore on his shoulder and on his heart the names of the people whose advocate and intercessor he was; and thus he beautifully typified Jesus, our Great High Priest, who ever presents His saints before God in radiant glory, like stones most precious; bearing them upon His shoulder, the place of sustaining power, and upon His heart, the place of tender love.

Whether the Urim and the Thummin were anything superadded to the breastplate, or were the precious stones themselves, is not certainly known. The probability is that they were identical. Nor is it determined how the oracular response was delivered; whether, as the rabbinical tradition asserts, by a supernatural light streaming forth from some of the component letters of the engraven names, which were then read as the answer; or, what is more likely, by an audible voice from God Himself.

David then called for Abiathar, who invested himself with the ephod, and presented himself before the Lord. He asked if he should pursue the troop;

and received the consolatory and explicit assurance that he should surely overtake them, and without fail recover all. The response encouraged his faith and hope, and invigorated his wearied and depressed followers, who immediately set out in pursuit. The marauders might easily be guessed to be none other than the Amalekites, who had thus revenged the late slaughter of their people; and the track of the retreating expedition might be inferred, with somewhat of certainty, to have been in a southward direction, across the brook Besor.

No time was to be lost; and, in hot haste, though already fatigued with a three days' march, the six hundred men press onward to the brook. The waters were at that time, probably, high; and, from the impetuosity of the current, difficult and dangerous to ford, especially to men whose tired limbs were scarcely able to support them on solid ground. Two hundred men sank down on the grassy bank, declaring with despondency that they were too faint to proceed, and utterly incompetent to the task of fording the swollen torrent. To be deprived of one-third of his small force was, doubtless, a fresh trial of David's faith; but promptitude in pursuit was of more consequence than numbers; and the diminished band resolved to go on, trusting in the assurance of Jehovah, and to leave their disabled companions to abide their return at the Besor.

Scarcely had they crossed the brook, when they fell in with a wretched man, lying on the ground, at

the point of death. He had dragged himself to a low bush, whose scanty shadow scarcely defended him from the burning sun. His countenance and dress told him to be an Egyptian, whom, the day before, the Hebrew troop might perhaps have left to perish; but affliction had now softened their hearts, and they ministered to this suffering stranger the relief of which he evidently stood in need. The restorative power of food and drink was soon apparent; his spirit and strength revived; and he was able to inform them that he had been the slave of an Amalekite, and had actually been engaged in the sack of Ziklag. Happening to fall sick on the retreat, his cruel master had left him on the road to die; and during the three days that had since elapsed, he had neither eaten food nor drunk water. The mercy shown to this perishing stranger was not without reward; for it was the means ordained by God for the recovery of that which had been taken away. He agreed, on the promise of protection, to bring down the Hebrews to the Amalekite band, with whose place of intended repose he was well acquainted.

How far the marauders had retreated we are not informed; probably, counting on the whole available force of Israel being now engaged in the great conflict with the Philistines, at a distance, they were in no hurry to get home, but were taking their ease on these grassy plains. They were soon discovered, spread abroad upon the ground, eating and drinking, and making merry, rioting on the abundant spoil

which they had taken, not only from Ziklag, but from other parts of the country of the Philistines, and from the south of Judah, and other contiguous districts. The expedition seems to have been not exclusively one of revenge upon David, but to have been intended for general plunder, taking advantage of the absence of the men able to bear arms, now gathered to the scene of war. God, in His gracious providence, had so ordered that none of the captives were injured; David's two wives and the families of his followers were preserved, for cupidity had prevailed over revenge. In this we see the tenderness of God's fatherly chastisement; He never inflicts one stroke upon His erring children more than sufficient to effect the purpose which He designs for them. The captivity of those dear to David had rebuked and humbled him, which was the object designed by Jehovah; their violent death or irreparable dishonour might have crushed him.

The unarmed and riotous band of Amalekites were incapable of resistance: the swords of the avenging Israelites fell unsparingly; the darkness of the night (for it was in the fading twilight that the angry band burst in upon their revelry) helped to increase the panic, as well as to conceal the numbers of the assailants; many were slain upon the spot, and only the swiftness of their dromedaries saved four hundred young men from the fierce pursuit, which lasted through the whole of that night, and until the evening of the next day.

Great was the joy, and many and cordial were the congratulations, and fervent, surely, the thanksgivings, of the victorious band, when the battle and the pursuit were done, as each man found his beloved wife, his sons, and his daughters, unhurt by the spoilers; and when, according to the oracle of Jehovah, nothing of all their property was lacking. But they gained far more than had been taken away; for all the booty that the marauders had plundered from the neighbouring countries fell into their hands.

Thus does the Christian often prove the freeness of the grace of God. We may not sin that grace may abound: God forbid! but a believer, who has unwarily fallen into the snares of the adversary, often proves, after having been truly humbled, and restored to communion with the Lord, that he has gained by the transaction what he might never have otherwise attained. In one aspect, it is true, he can never regain his former position; he can never be exactly the same man that he was before; the dishonour done to the name of Christ, and the injury inflicted on the Church, remains, and can never be effaced. But, in another aspect, it is made a true and real blessing to him; he has learned much, and that in the way in which it is most effectually learned,—by experience. He has seen more of the craft and subtlety, the power and the malice, of Satan; and more of the weakness and treachery and innate corruption of his own heart. And this, though an humbling, is a profitable lesson; for, the more self is abased,

and the more Christ is honoured, the better for time and for eternity. He feels, more deeply than before, the evil and bitterness of sin; and more than ever he values the precious Blood of Sprinkling, which cleanses from all its defilement, as well as from all its guilt. His intercourse with God in Christ will be henceforth more humble, more grateful, more holy; he will walk more circumspectly, and more prayerfully. Nor will the advantage be limited to his own soul; he is qualified, by the exercises through which he has passed, to minister more effectually to his brethren. He will now know how to warn the careless, how to sympathise with the tempted, how to yearn over poor backsliders, and how to comfort the trembling penitents, and cheer them to the race again. Peter would be better able to strengthen his brethren, and to feed the sheep and lambs of Jesus' fold, after his painful fall and happy restoration, than before; and who can tell how much of the peculiar fatherly tenderness that marks his epistles,—his richness of consolation in the fiery trial through which the Church was passing,—his earnest admonitions to vigilance against the wiles of the arch adversary,—may have been, under grace, owing to his having been in the furnace himself, and having proved the prowess of the foe?

Laden with spoil, David and his troop return to the brook Besor, where they are joyfully saluted by their now recruited comrades. To the unkind and selfish suggestion of some in the band, whose hard

hearts neither adversity nor prosperity had availed to soften,—that those who had been unable to go to the battle should not partake of the spoil,—David administers a temperate but decisive rebuke. He ascribes the success wholly to Jehovah; and establishes it as an ordinance in Israel, that all who bear part in any expedition shall share equally in the spoil, whether they actually engage in the conflict, or abide with the baggage. Sad would it be for us if only He who fought the fight and won the victory enjoyed the spoil; but He joyfully makes His people, even the meanest and weakest, full partakers of all the gain and glory that result from His conflict. Let us imitate His example, and gladly share with our brethren whatever fruits of grace have been communicated to us.

Genesis XX.—XXVI.

THIS Brook is memorable also for scenes and incidents far earlier than the time of David; for the region through which its waters flowed was the ancient Gerar, where, in turn, both Abraham and Isaac sojourned; and the city of the same name, over which Abimelech reigned, was in all probability on its banks. The higher parts of the stream drained the waters of the hills, the sloping sides of which formed the valley of Gerar, whither Isaac, for peace' sake resorted, when the jealousy of the Philistines

constrained him to leave their more immediate vicinity.

From several casual allusions in the Holy Scriptures, we gather that the Philistines, who for so long a period maintained possession of the south-west portion of Canaan, and gave the name of Palestine to the whole of that country, were an Egyptian colony. At the time of their migration, which was probably not long before the period of Abraham's sojourn in Gerar, they seem to have included two tribes—the Palishtim, and the Caphtorim, each of which names at length came to be used indiscriminately to designate this people; though the former was, by far, the more common. From the manner in which the triumphal ode of the children of Israel alludes to them, after the crossing of the Red Sea, as well as from the reason assigned by God why He would not lead them by the shortest and most obvious route to Canaan, we infer that the Philistines had early acquired a renown for that martial prowess which they afterwards so well maintained in the long contests for supremacy with the people of Israel. The latter made no attempts at maritime commerce or power until the reign of the magnificent Solomon; at which time the power of the Philistine nation had been effectually broken by the successful career of David. Hence, the Israelites would never come into contact with them as a naval power; and we should not have known that the Philistines were eminent on the sea, however we might have judged it probable from their

occupying the seaboard, and from the Mediterranean being called by their name ("the Sea of the Philistines," Exod. xxiii. 31), if the ancient Egyptian sculptures and paintings had not revealed the fact. Those interesting monuments, recently brought to light, represent naval as well as military battles, in which the conflicting parties are found, from the hieroglyphic inscriptions, to be the Egyptians and the Palishta; while more commonly these two kindred nations are seen in close alliance, fighting against a common enemy.

That portion of the land which we are now discussing had been previously occupied by the Avim,—a people whom some are inclined to regard as a tribe of the Hivites; but these had been overcome and destroyed by the superior energy, force, or skill of the immigrating Caphtorim. The latter seem to have been in a more polished condition than the Canaanitish tribes, which they doubtless owed to their Egyptian origin. Thus not only is the kingly government recognised, but hereditary succession seems to be established; for Abimelech is the name of the king who reigned in Gerar in Isaac's days, as it had been that of him with whom Abraham sojourned nearly a hundred years before. Each of these monarchs is attended by a "captain of the host,"—an officer whose function implies a high state of military organization. It is remarkable that the name of this officer was hereditary, no less than that of his master. Some suppose that both of the

names, Abimelech and Phichol, were official, and not personal titles (especially as the former signifies "My father, the king,"); as Pharaoh was the constant title of the reigning Egyptian monarch. If this was so, it would no less indicate a cultivated state of society, and would afford another interesting affinity with Egyptian usages.

The Philistines appear to have never contracted friendships or alliances with the nations of Canaan, "not even on those occasions when all the inhabitants of the land might be expected to unite as one man in resistance to the invading Israelites; and when, in fact, powerful confederacies were formed for that purpose by the native princes. The Philistines were the most inveterate enemies which the Hebrews in Canaan ever had; and yet in their wars we find them proceeding as a distinct people, with separate interests of their own, acting by themselves and for themselves, assisted by none, and never assisting others."*

An interesting trait in the character of this people is their apparent freedom from the idolatry and vice which had debased the surrounding nations. The first Abimelech was evidently acquainted with the name and attributes of Jehovah, to whom he appealed, in the confidence of a worshipper, for the integrity of his own heart, and the general righteousness of his people; and to this appeal God Himself responded.

* Kitto's Hist. of Palestine, 85.

His abhorrence of the sin of adultery, and his sense of the injury done him in laying temptation in his way, as also his kindness to Abraham, indicate that true religion yet lingered here; while the appeal, "Jehovah, wilt Thou slay also a righteous nation?" alluding, no doubt, to the late dreadful overthrow of Sodom, implies a great difference between his own people and the guilty Canaanites, and proves that he knew Jehovah to be one who could not but do right.

The intercourse of Isaac with the second Abimelech shows that this purity of faith and morals had not yet been corrupted. How long it remained we are not told; but when, a few centuries afterwards, we again find this people on the stage of history, it is as the besotted worshippers of Dagon, the god with a fish's form, and as the cruel oppressors of Israel.

It is remarkable that all the narratives connected with this river present us with signal failures of eminent saints, and humiliating rebukes of their unbelief, exceedingly similar to each other. We have already seen how the holy David was betrayed into distrust of Jehovah's kind and watchful care, and thence into prevarication and lying; and we have seen "the end of the Lord" in reproving and recovering him. We have now to tell as sad a story of the "father of the faithful," the "friend of God."

Abraham had had repeated promises from God of a numerous offspring; and latterly these assurances had been confirmed in solemn covenant, and the promised seed had been distinctly announced by

name, and described as to be born of Sarah his wife. Yet, when he came to sojourn in Gerar, he fell under the power of a sore temptation, and dishonoured, by distrusting, Jehovah. Ignorant that there was any fear of God, or sense of morality among the Philistines, he dreaded the effect which the extraordinary beauty of Sarah—aged, indeed, but now restored to preternatural youthfulness—might produce upon lawless men; and supposed that, if it were known that he was her husband, they would not scruple to slay him in order to seize her. He therefore besought her to represent herself as his sister,—a relationship which did exist by the father's side, but not by the mother's. Thus he showed no concern for the chastity of his wife, which he the more exposed by his disingenuous artifice, but a slavish dread of death, which he was willing to avoid at the expense of his wife's honour; though one thought of the glorious promises which had been made to him would have effectually silenced his fears. It was probably the custom then, as now, among the pastoral tent-dwelling tribes, for the unmarried women to have great part of their faces exposed; while the married women were enveloped in a veil, which left none of the features visible. The consequence was that the king of the country sent and took the fair Hebrew for his harem.

But Jehovah, who permitted this to happen for the rebuke of His unbelieving servant, did not forget His own faithfulness. Most precious is that truth: "If

we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself." He effectually interposed His power in such a way as prevented the dishonour of Sarah, intimating in a night vision to the king the true relation that subsisted between her and the patriarch, and the danger which he had unwittingly incurred by seizing another's wife. Abimelech obeyed, and having cautioned his servants, called for Abraham; and he who was called "the friend of God," who had been honoured to partake the counsels of Jehovah, and who was the heir of the promises, stood in the humbling position of hearing his sin reproved by one whom he had supposed destitute of the fear of God. Thus sometimes, still, the natural conscience of unrenewed men is found more sensitive to sin than the sleeping conscience of careless Christians; but it is greatly to the shame of the latter. Nor does the excuse wherewith Abraham attempts to palliate his evil much mend the matter: his whole conduct in this transaction is greatly to his disadvantage. It is recorded, however, for our benefit; inasmuch as it shows that even Abraham had not "whereof to glory" in his own works; that he was not and could not be justified by these; but only by faith upon the righteousness of God in Christ, whose "day" he saw afar off, and rejoiced to see it.

To Sarah also, who had allowed herself to be enticed into a share of the sin, the justly offended monarch administered a reproof, not the less severe because of the delicate manner in which it was con-

veyed. "Behold, I have given to thy 'brother' a thousand pieces of silver, to purchase such a veil as shall indicate thy relation."

Yet, though the Lord sometimes allows His people to stand reproved before the world, He will nevertheless have it manifested that they sustain a covenant relation with Himself, and that He puts a special honour upon them, notwithstanding their failures. They are His, not because of their righteousness, but because of His own grace; and hence their failures in faith or obedience cannot alienate His love, though they bring down His chastisements. God would have Abimelech seek Abraham's prayers; and it was in immediate answer to His servant's intercessions, doubtless very humbling and profitable to his own soul, that Jehovah removed those inflictions which the temporary possession of Sarah had brought upon the house of the Philistine king.

The narrative of Isaac's failure is so similar in its details, that, if it had not been recorded by Him who cannot err, we might have supposed it another version of the same transaction: we therefore need not further allude to it, but shall follow this patriarch from the actual dominions of Abimelech to the valley of Gerar, whither he was driven by the jealousy of the Philistines, envious of his increasing prosperity.

Though the land of Israel, when under the peculiar blessing of God, was a land of brooks of water, a land that drank of the rain of heaven, and must not be estimated by its present condition, when languish-

ing under the threatened curse of drought and barrenness; yet even then the rains were seasonal; and we have pretty clear indication in the records of Abraham's and Isaac's biography, that, at least in the southern part of the country, there were no perennial streams. During, and for some time after, the rains of winter, the valley of Gerar was doubtless the bed of a copious stream, which, as already intimated, became known in the lower part of its course through the undulating plains as the Brook Besor; and, if this had continued to flow through the summer and autumn, abundant water for pastoral and agricultural purposes would have been supplied, and the labour of digging wells have been superseded. But this was not the case; in both Abraham's and Isaac's sojourns in this region, the digging of wells forms marked events; and the contentions of which they were the occasions show the importance of the water so obtained. Isaac had recently turned his attention to agriculture; he had "sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundred-fold"—an enormous rate of increase, but "Jehovah blessed him." It was therefore, in all probability, no less for the purposes of irrigation that he dug wells in the valley, than for the supply of his flocks and herds; and, as he who bestows the needful labour and expense upon the formation of a well in an arid district, to a certain extent creates its fruitfulness, it is considered still in some parts (as in Persia, for instance) to confer a proprietorship in the land so

fertilized. It was doubtless on this account that the Philistines took pains to fill up the excavated wells both of Abraham and of Isaac, or disputed the possession of them; as fearing that the wealthy strangers might establish a claim upon the lands which they occupied, that might afterwards prove inconvenient.*

In the dominions of Abimelech there might be some justice in the rigid exclusiveness of the Philistines; and Isaac readily departed at the suggestion of the king, and pitched his tent in the valley, which seems to have remained as yet unappropriated. Having re-opened the old wells which Abraham had digged, he gave to them the names which had been originally conferred on them by that patriarch. The custom of naming wells no doubt arose from the desire of establishing a right to the water; and tradition would preserve the circumstances which induced the selection of the name (for this was always significant,) much longer than if no distinctive appellation had been given. We are not told that the Philistines interfered with Isaac in these operations; perhaps they felt that the evidence of property which the revival of the old names gave was too strong to be openly resisted; though they had not scrupled to fill up the wells secretly. But on his digging new ones, matters came to an open rupture. The servants of Isaac, digging in the valley, came

* Dr. Kitto.

upon a fine spring, which roused the envy of the Philistine herdmen who were pasturing their flocks in the neighbourhood, and they disputed the possession of the water by force of arms. Another well was the subject of similar contention; and Isaac meekly relinquished both, having first bestowed upon them the odious names of Esek and Sitnah, signifying *strife* and *hatred.* The Philistines in these transactions appear peculiarly unamiable, selfishly seeking to derive exclusive advantage from the labours of another—labours which they had not energy or skill to perform for themselves. But Isaac exemplifies the lovely principle of *grace*, giving up his right for the sake of peace; content, although confessedly the stronger, "much mightier than they," to be imposed-on, rather than resist evil, where only his convenience or interest was concerned: like his promised Seed, to whom he looked in anticipating faith, and of whom he was an illustrious type, he "restored that which he took not away."

XVII.

THE RIVER NILE.

TOPOGRAPHY.

Ancient Renown—The White and Blue Rivers—Valley of Egypt—Periodical Overflow—Consequent Fertility—Ancient Monuments—Early Civilization—Abram's Visit—Moses—The Plagues of Egypt—Subsequent History.

WE now again leave the goodly land of Canaan, to consider a river, mighty and renowned indeed, but one whose name would be chiefly associated in the mind of Israel with memories and traditions of bitter captivity,—the "iron furnace" of Egyptian bondage. The Nile is the great river of northern and eastern Africa, pursuing a course of more than 1,800 miles, in a direction nearly due north, from the centre of that great continent to the Mediterranean. The various sources of this river are yet involved in obscurity; but they are believed to rise in lofty mountains to the north of the equator.* The principal branches are called the White and the Blue rivers, which, after passing through Abyssinia, unite in the region of Sennaar. From this point it receives but one tributary of any importance, until it falls into the Mediterranean by several diverging mouths, forming the Delta of Egypt. The greater part of its course lies through a narrow valley, rarely exceeding a few miles in width, hemmed in on both sides by low ranges of mountains. Some portions of even this narrow strip are little better than the sandy desert

* Let the text remain as a memorial of our ignorance a quarter of a century ago. But what magnificent revelations of Lakes and Rivers in the heart of Africa have been made since! The course of the Nile can hardly be less than 3,000 miles.

around; but other parts, especially the lower course of the river, forming the land of Egypt, possess an astonishing fertility, owing to the annual deposition of a rich alluvial mud, by the overflow of the river in summer.

After the waters have retired within their banks, which takes place in November, the agricultural preparations begin; and the valley soon assumes the appearance of a delightful garden, covered with verdant crops, enamelled with flowers, and interspersed with groves of fruit-trees and luxuriant palms. The harvest is gathered in March and April, after which the heat becomes intense, and the suffocating *khamseen*, or south wind, sweeping along clouds of fine sand, and parching up all vegetation, makes the inhabitants look forward with eagerness to the rise of the Nile, the hope of the succeeding year.

All through the valley, on both sides of the river, lie scattered, in astonishing profusion, the monuments of ancient Egypt,—grand and imposing palaces, temples, sepulchres, and colossal statues, the remnant of the power and science of those early days when Abram visited the land of Ham, and Joseph preserved her from destruction.

The *name* of the Nile does not occur in Scripture (unless it be the "Sihor" of Jer. ii. 18); but it is spoken of as "the river" more than twenty times, and much of the early history of God's chosen people is linked with it. To describe all the scenes associated with it would be to transcribe nearly one-third of the

books of Genesis and Exodus; but the limits assigned to this little volume will not permit us to do more than enumerate some of the most prominent of the incidents with which it is connected.

THE NILE.

The researches of modern times, and the light reflected from the ancient monuments, prove that Egypt was a highly polished kingdom, renowned in arts and arms, when first visited by Abram. He stood upon the banks of the broad Nile, as it rolled

through the majestic city of the Pharaohs; and his descendant, Joseph, witnessed beside its waters the depth of adversity and the height of prosperity. In the flags and rushes that waved along its margin the fair infant Moses was exposed in his reedy cradle, when the daughter of the monarch, approaching to bathe in its refreshing waters, felt tender compassion for the babe, and rescued him from the obscene crocodiles. On its brink stood the prophet, when, having come to years, and preferring the afflictions of the people of God to the honours of the Egyptian court, his wonder-working rod brought plagues upon the land of Ham. The frogs came swarming from the river's depths; and, worse than all, the river itself—whose waters were esteemed preferable to all others, the source of fertility and wealth—became *blood;* and that which had been honoured as a god, became abominable and loathsome to its admirers! The great contest between Jehovah and the gods of Egypt took place upon the banks of the Nile, which ended in the shameful discomfiture of the latter, and the triumphant avenging and delivering of the enslaved house of Israel.

Varied were the scenes which, in after ages, were enacted beside the mighty "father of waters." The ravages of the desolator, Cambyses; the silken-sailed progresses of the voluptuous Cleopatra; the conflagration of the glorious library of the Ptolemies; the disastrous expedition of Napoleon; the bloody massacre of the Mamlooks; the rolling Nile has

successively witnessed : and through all it has seen the gradual, but sure, degradation of its possessors, from the very summit of civilization, opulence, and power, until Egypt has become—what Divine prophecy long ages ago declared it should be—"the basest of kingdoms."

THUS we have briefly sketched the history of those Rivers and Streams whose names are embalmed in the narratives of Holy Writ. Many events of high moment, many scenes of interest, many examples of human failure and of Divine grace, we have seen connected with them; and we have surely learned from their history some lessons of heavenly wisdom, such as the Word of God alone can teach. There is one other Sacred Stream ;—one which the inquisitive traveller has never looked upon, but whose crystal waters, seen in vision, once gladdened the anointed eye of the beloved disciple in Patmos ; and myriads of happy saints shall, by-and-by, "walk in white" upon its pleasant banks. It is the "River, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God ;" it is the "pure River of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb." Not on earth does it flow ; sin-ridden and polluted as they are, the sunniest, fairest lands of earth would be wholly ungenial to its purity. It flows through the golden streets of the "City that hath *the* foundations," the New Jerusalem, yet hidden

with God, but shortly to be revealed. The tree of life, that once grew in the midst of Eden, soon had to be withdrawn from earth; but it was to be transplanted by this heavenly River, where it flourishes abundantly "on either side;" and those who shall be hereafter privileged to walk there, shall pluck the fruit of the tree of life, and drink of that river of pleasures, and live for ever. Nothing but joy belongs to that blissful scene, and eternity is stamped upon all.

May it be the favoured lot of every reader of these pages, as well as of their author, to find an everlasting home by those "living fountains of waters," "in the midst of the Paradise of God!"

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